School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1361074

The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

THE WRITINGS

OF THE

DOCTRINAL PURITANS

AND

DIVINES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

JANUARY, 1846.

DOCTRINAL PURITANS

AND

DIVINES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

During the last twenty years, the Committee of the Religious Tract Society have sent forth many of the valuable writings of those devoted servants of Christ, who lived and wrote in the seventeenth century, and of others of a later date, who, being like-minded, have borne a similar testimony. These are The Doctrinal Puritans of our land.

Few persons are aware of the extent to which these publications have been prepared by the Religious Tract Society, and that for a few shillings many of the most valuable writings of our divines who succeeded the reformers may be obtained. Amidst the continued efforts now made to engage public attention to the productions of the press, the Committee of the Religious Tract Society find it an imperative duty prominently to state what has been done, and to show that readers of every station may *at once* avail themselves of the result of these exertions, to a greater or less extent, as they please.

Although these invaluable treasures have now, for some years, been placed within the reach of all classes of the community, public attention has not been directed to them as a whole, forming a col-

lective body of sound Protestant, scriptural truth, suitable for libraries, whether for private use or public circulation, and for the many circumstances and states of life which render the possession of such books, and their presentation to others, valuable benefits. The advantages arising from improved methods and proceedings in mechanical preparation, and in other ways, also enable the Committee now to offer this series in volumes, on terms at which, a few years since, only the pamphlet of a few pages could be acquired.

Many of the Society's works, as LEIGHTON, BUNYAN, and CHILLINGWORTH, are now given in a more correct form than in the numerous reprints of late years. Others are abridged, or condensed, so as to render them much more valuable for circulation, and desirable for perusal; these books being distinguished accordingly, while, as a whole, they will be found edited with much care and fidelity.

The Series of publications now about to be issued, will contain some of the best works of The Doctrinal Puritans and Divines of the Seventeenth Century. They will be arranged in pocket volumes, containing on the average, three hundred and sixty pages each, in neat cloth boards; the price to subscribers and booksellers, being 1*s.* the volume, and 1*s.* 4*d.* to non-subscribers.

It is proposed to issue them to subscribers to this series at the rate of a volume every alternate month, or six volumes in the year, for the subscription of six shillings annually, paid in advance.

The following are the six volumes for the first year, issued in alternate months, beginning with January, 1846.

VOL. I.

January 1.

HOWE ON THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; AND, THE REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

VOL. II.

March 1.

SELECT DEVOTIONAL WORKS OF BISHOP HALL.

VOL. III.

May 1.

CHARNOCK'S DISCOURSES ON CHRIST CRUCIFIED; AND, A DISCOURSE PROVING WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

VOL. IV.

July 1.

BISHOP HOPKINS' PRACTICAL EXPOSITION ON THE LORD'S PRAYER; AND, ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO COVENANTS.

VOL. V.

September 1.

THOMAS WATSON'S SAINT'S SPIRITUAL DELIGHT; A DIVINE CORDIAL; AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

VOL. VI.

November 1.

BISHOP REYNOLDS' ISRAEL'S PRAYER IN TIME OF TROUBLE; AND THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER.

The names of subscribers to this series of the "DOCTRINAL PURITANS," will be received at 56, Paternoster-row; and the books delivered to any London address. Sold also by all the booksellers on the usual terms.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;
56, PATERNOSTER-ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

B1
715

DOCTRINAL PURITANS

ON

INDWELLING SIN;

AND, ON

THE MORTIFICATION OF SIN

IN

BELIEVERS.

BY

JOHN OWEN, D.D.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

THE NATURE, POWER, DECEIT,

AND PREVALENCY OF

INDWELLING SIN

IN BELIEVERS:

TOGETHER WITH

THE WAYS OF ITS WORKING, AND MEANS OF PREVENTION, OPENED, EVINCED, AND APPLIED. WITH A RESOLUTION OF SUNDRY CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

BY JOHN OWEN, D. D.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vii. 24, 25.

School of Theology

PREFACE.

That the doctrine of original sin is one of the fundamental truths of our christian profession, hath been always owned in the church of God. And an especial part it is of that peculiar profession of truth which they enjoy, whose religion towards God is built upon, and resolved into, Divine revelation. As the world, by its wisdom, never knew God aright, so the wise men of it were always utterly ignorant of this inbred evil in themselves and others. With us, the doctrine and conviction of it lie in the very foundation of all wherein we have to do with God, in reference unto our pleasing of him here, or obtaining the enjoyment of him hereafter. It is also known what influence it hath into the great truths concerning the person of Christ, his mediation, the fruits and effects of it, with all the benefits

that we are made partakers of thereby. Without a supposition of it, not any of them can be truly known, or savingly believed. For this cause hath it been largely treated of by many holy and learned men, both of old and of latter days. Some have laboured in the discovery of its nature, some of its guilt and demerit; by whom also the truth concerning it hath been vindicated from the opposition made unto it in the past and present ages. By most, these things have been considered in their full extent and latitude, with respect unto all men by nature, with the state and condition of them who are wholly under the power and guilt of it. How, thereby, men are disenabled and incapacitated in themselves to answer the obedience required, either in the law or the gospel, so as to free themselves from the curse of the one, or to make themselves partakers of the blessing of the other, hath been by many also fully evinced. Moreover, that there are remainders of it abiding in believers, after their regeneration and conversion to God, as the Scripture

abundantly testifies, so it hath been fully taught and confirmed ; as also how the guilt of it is pardoned unto them, and by what means the power of it is weakened in them. All these things, I say, have been largely treated on, to the great benefit and edification of the church. In what we have now in design, we therefore take them all for granted, and endeavour only further to carry on the discovery of it in its actings and oppositions to the law and grace of God in believers. Neither do I intend the discussing of any thing that hath been controverted about it. What the Scripture plainly revealeth and teacheth concerning it, what believers evidently find by experience in themselves, what they may learn from the examples and acknowledgments of others, shall be represented in a way suited unto the capacity of the meanest and weakest who is concerned therein. And many things seem to render the handling of it, at this season, not unnecessary. The effects and fruits of it which we see, in the apostasies and backslidings of many, the

scandalous sins and miscarriages of some, and the course and lives of the most, seem to call for a due consideration of it. Besides, of how great concernment a full and clear acquaintance with the power of this indwelling sin (the matter designed to be opened) is unto believers, to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence, to faith and prayer, to call them to repentance, humility, and self-abasement, will appear in our progress. These, in general, were the ends aimed at in the ensuing discourse; which being at first composed and delivered for the use and benefit of a few, is now, by the providence of God, made public. And if the reader receive any advantage by these weak endeavours, let him know that it is his duty, as to give glory unto God, so to help them by his prayers, who, in many temptations and afflictions, are willing to labour in the vineyard of the Lord, unto which work they are called.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Indwelling sin in believers treated of by the apostle, Rom. vii. 21. The place explained 1

CHAPTER II.

Indwelling sin a law. In what sense it is so called. What kind of law it is. An inward effective principle called a law. The power of sin thence evinced. 10

CHAPTER III.

The seat or subject of the law of sin the heart. What meant thereby. Properties of the heart as possessed by sin; unsearchable, deceitful. Whence that deceit ariseth. Improvements of these considerations . . . 20

CHAPTER IV.

Indwelling sin enmity against God. Thence its power. Admits of no peace nor rest: is against God himself: acts itself in aversation from God, and propensity to evil. Is universal: to all of God; in all of the soul; constant 31

CHAPTER V.

PAGE

Nature of sin further discovered, as it is enmity against God. Its aversation from all good opened. Means to prevent the effects of it prescribed 40

CHAPTER VI.

The work of this enmity against God by way of opposition. First, it lusteth. Wherein the lusting of sin consisteth. In surprising the soul; readiness to close with temptations; its fighting and warring, in rebellion against the law of grace, and in assaulting the soul . . 51

CHAPTER VII.

The captivating power of indwelling sin, wherein it consisteth. The prevalency of sin, when from itself, when from temptation. The rage and madness that is in sin 72

CHAPTER VIII.

Indwelling sin proved powerful from its deceit. Proved to be deceitful. The general nature of deceit; James i. 14, opened. How the mind is drawn off from its duty by the deceitfulness of sin. The principal duties of the mind in our obedience. The ways and means whereby it is turned from it 87

CHAPTER IX.

The deceit of sin in drawing off the mind from a due attendance unto especial duties of obedience; instanced in meditation and prayer 107

CHAPTER X.

The deceit of sin, in drawing off the mind from its attendance unto particular duties, further discovered.

PAGE

Several things required in the mind of believers, with respect unto particular duties of obedience. Actings of sin, in a way of deceit, to divert the mind from them . 121

CHAPTER XI.

The working of sin by deceit to entangle the affections. The ways whereby it is done. Means of their prevention 141

CHAPTER XII.

The conception of sin through its deceit. Wherein it consisteth. The consent of the will unto sin. The nature thereof. Ways and means whereby it is obtained. Other advantages made use of by the deceit of sin. Ignorance; errors 15

CHAPTER XIII.

Several ways whereby the bringing forth of conceived sin is obstructed 165

CHAPTER XIV.

The power of sin further demonstrated by the effects it hath had in the lives of professors. First, in actual sins; secondly, in habitual declensions 191

CHAPTER XV.

Decays in degrees of grace caused by indwelling sin. The ways of its prevalency to this purpose 212

CHAPTER XVI.

PAGE

The strength of indwelling sin manifested from its power and effects in persons unregenerate 233

CHAPTER XVII.

The strength of sin evinced from its resistance unto the power of the law 249

OF

INDWELLING SIN,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

Indwelling sin in believers treated of by the apostle, Rom. vii. 21. *The place explained.*

It is of indwelling sin, and that in the remainders of it in persons after their conversion to God, with its power, efficacy, and effects, that we intend to treat. This also it is the great design of the apostle to manifest and evince, in chap. vii. of the epistle to the Romans. Many indeed are the contests about the principal scope of the apostle in that chapter, and in what state the person is, under the law or under grace, whose condition he expresseth therein. I shall not at present enter into that dispute, but take that for granted which may be undeniably proved and evinced; namely, that it is the condition of a regenerate person with respect unto the remaining power of indwelling sin, which is there proposed and exemplified, by and in the person of the apostle himself. In that discourse therefore of his, shall the foundation be laid of what we have to offer upon this subject. Not that I shall proceed in an exposition of his revelation of this truth,

as it lies in its own contexture, but only make use of what is delivered by him as occasion shall offer itself.

And here first occurreth that which he affirms, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me," ver. 21. There are four things observable in these words. I. The appellation he gives unto indwelling sin, whereby he expresseth its power and efficacy; it is a *law*. For that which he terms a *law* in this verse, he calls in the foregoing, "sin that dwelleth in him." II. The way whereby he came to the discovery of this law; not absolutely, and in its own nature, but in himself he *found* it; "I find a law." III. The frame of his soul and inward man with this law of sin, and under its discovery; "he would do good." IV. The state and activity of this law when the soul is in that frame; when it would do good, "it is present with him." For what ends and purposes we shall show afterwards.

I. The first thing observable is the appellation here used by the apostle, he calls indwelling sin, "a law." It is a law.

A law is taken either properly, for a *directive rule*, or improperly, for an *operative effective principle* which seems to have the force of a law. In its first sense, it is a moral rule, which directs and commands, and sundry ways moves and regulates the mind and the will as to things which it requires or forbids. This is evidently the general nature and work of a law. Some things it commands, some things it forbids, with rewards and penalties, which move and impel men to do the one, and avoid the other. Hence, in a secondary sense, an inward principle that moves and inclines constantly unto any actions, is called a *law*. The principle that is in the nature of every thing, moving and carrying it towards its own end and rest, is called

the *law of nature*. In this respect every inward principle, that inclineth and urgeth unto operations or actings suitable to itself, is a law. So, the powerful and effectual working of the Spirit and grace of Christ in the hearts of believers, is called the "law of the Spirit of life," Rom. viii. 2. And for this reason doth the apostle here call indwelling sin a law. It is a powerful and effectual indwelling principle, inclining and pressing unto actions agreeable and suitable unto its nature. This, and no other, is the intention of the apostle in this expression. For although that term, a *law*, may sometimes intend a *state* and *condition*, and if here so used, the meaning of the words should be, I find that this is my *condition*, this is the *state* of things with me, that when I would do good evil is present with me, which makes no great alteration in the principal intendment of the place; yet properly, it can denote nothing here but the chief subject treated of. For although the name of a *law* be variously used by the apostle in this chapter, yet when it relates to *sin*, it is no where applied by him to the condition of the person, but only to express either the nature or the power of sin itself. So ver. 23; "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." That which he here calls the *law of his mind*, from the principal subject and seat of it, is in itself no other but the "law of the Spirit of life," which is in Christ Jesus, chap. viii. 2; or the effectual power of the Spirit of grace, as was said. But the *law*, as applied unto *sin*, hath a double sense: for as in the first place, "I see a law in my members," it denotes the being and nature of sin; so in the latter, "leading into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members," it signifies

its power and efficacy; and both these are comprised in the same name singly used, ver. 20. Now that which we observe from this *name* or term of "a law" attributed unto sin is, that there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling sin in believers, with a constant working towards evil.

Thus it is in believers; it is a law even in them, though not to them. Though its rule be broken, its strength weakened and impaired, its root mortified, yet it is a *law* still of great force and efficacy. There, where it is least felt, it is most powerful. Carnal men, in reference to spiritual and moral duties, are nothing but this law, they do nothing but from it and by it. It is in them a ruling and prevailing principle of all moral actions, with reference to a supernatural and eternal end. I shall not consider it in them in whom it hath most power, but in them in whom its power is chiefly discovered and discerned, that is, in believers; in the others only in order to the further conviction and manifestation thereof.

II. The apostle proposeth the way whereby he discovered this law in himself; "I find then," or therefore, "a law;" he found it. It had been told him there was such a law, it had been preached unto him; this convinced him that there was a *law of sin*. But it is one thing for a man to know in general that there is a law of sin, another thing for a man to have an experience of the power of this law of sin in himself. It is preached to all; all men that own the Scripture acknowledge it, as being declared therein; but they are but few that know it in themselves; we should else have more complaints of it than we have, and more contendings against it, and less fruits of it in the world. But this is that which the apostle affirms; not that the doctrine of it had been preached

unto him, but that he found it by experience in himself; "I find a law," I have experience of its power and efficacy. For a man to find his sickness, and danger thereon from its effects, is another thing than to hear a discourse about a disease from its causes. And this experience is the great preservative of all divine truths in the soul. This it is to know a thing indeed, in reality, to know it for ourselves, when, as we are taught it from the word, so we find it in ourselves. Hence we observe,

Further, believers have experience of the power and efficacy of indwelling sin. They *find* it in themselves, they find it as a law. It hath a self-evidencing efficacy to them that are alive to discern it; they that find not its power, are under its dominion. Whosoever contend against it, shall know and find that it is present with them, that it is powerful in them. He shall find the stream to be strong who swims against it, though he who rolls along with it be insensible of it.

III. The general frame of believers notwithstanding the inhabitation of this law of sin, is here also expressed; "they would do good." This law is present "to me when I would do good;" the habitual inclination of their will is unto good. This law in them, is not a law unto them, as it is to unbelievers. They are not wholly obnoxious to its power, nor morally unto its commands. Grace hath the sovereignty in their souls; this gives them a will unto good; they would do good, that is, always and constantly. To "commit sin," 1 John iii. 9, is to make a trade of sin, to make it a man's business to sin; so it is said, a believer doth "not commit sin." And so, "to do that which is good," to will to do so, is to have the habitual bent and inclination of the will set on that which is good, that is, morally and spiritually

good, which is the proper subject treated of: whence is our third observation.

There is, and there is through grace kept up in believers, a constant and ordinarily prevailing will of doing good, notwithstanding the power and efficacy of indwelling sin to the contrary.

This, in their worst condition, distinguisheth them from unbelievers in their best. The will in unbelievers is under the power of the law of sin: the opposition they make to sin, either in the root or branches of it, is from their light and their consciences; the will of sinning in them is never taken away. Take away all other considerations and hinderances, whereof we shall treat afterwards, and they would sin willingly always. Their faint endeavours to answer their convictions, are far from "a will of doing that which is good." They will plead, indeed, that they would leave their sins if they could, and they would fain do better than they do. But it is the working of their light and convictions, not any spiritual inclination of their wills, which they intend by that expression. For where there is a will of doing good, there is a choice of that which is good for its own excellency's sake, because it is desirable and suitable to the soul, and therefore to be preferred before that which is contrary. Now this is not in any unbelievers; they do not, they cannot, so choose that which is spiritually good; nor is it so excellent or suitable unto any principle that is in them. Only they have some desires to attain that end whereunto that which is good doth lead, and to avoid that evil which the neglect of it tends unto; and these also, for the most part, are so weak and languid in many of them, that they put them not upon any considerable endeavours: witness that luxury, sloth, worldliness, and security, that the generality of men

are even drowned in. But in believers there is a will of doing good, an habitual disposition and inclination in their wills unto that which is spiritually good. And where this is, it is accompanied with answerable effects. The will is the principle of our moral actions, and therefore, unto the prevailing disposition thereof, will the general course of our actions be suited. Good things will proceed from the good treasures of the heart. Nor can this disposition be evidenced to be in any but by its fruits. A will of doing good, without doing good, is but pretended.

IV. There is yet another thing remaining in these words of the apostle, arising from that respect that the presence of sin hath unto the time and season of duty; "when I would do good," saith he, "evil is present with me."

There are two things to be considered in the will of doing good that is in believers.

1. There is its habitual residence in them. They have always an habitual inclination of will unto that which is good. And this habitual preparation for good is always present with them, as the apostle expresses it, ver. 18, of this chapter.

2. There are special times and seasons for the exercise of that principle. There is a "when I would do good," a season wherein this or that good, this or that duty, is to be performed and accomplished, suitably unto the habitual preparation and inclination of the will.

Unto these two, there are two things in indwelling sin opposed. To the gracious principle residing in the will, inclining unto that which is spiritually good, it is opposed as it is a law, that is, a contrary principle inclining unto evil, with an aversation from that which is good. Unto the second, or the actual willing of this or that good in particular, unto this

"when I would do good," is opposed the presence of this law, "evil is present with me;" evil is at hand, and ready to oppose the actual accomplishment of the good aimed at. Whence this fourth head, namely, that indwelling sin is effectually operative in rebelling and inclining to evil, when the will of doing good is in a particular manner active, and inclining unto obedience.

And this is the description of him who is a believer, and a sinner; as every one who is the former, is the latter also. These are the contrary principles, and the contrary operations that are in him. The principles are, a will of doing good, on the one hand, from grace, and a law of sin on the other. Their adverse actings and operations are insinuated in those expressions, "when I would do good, evil is present with me." And these both are more fully expressed by the apostle; "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Gal. v. 17.

And here lie the springs of the whole course of our obedience. An acquaintance with these several principles and their actings, is the principal part of our wisdom. They are, as to the matter, next to the free grace of God in our justification by the blood of Christ, the only things wherein the glory of God and our own souls are concerned. These are the springs of our holiness and our sins, of our joys and troubles, of our refreshments and sorrows. It is, then, all our concernments to be thoroughly acquainted with these things, who intend to walk with God, or to glorify him in this world.

And hence we may see what wisdom is required in the guiding and management of our hearts and ways before God. Where the subjects of a ruler are in

feuds and oppositions one against another, unless great wisdom be used in the government of the whole, all things will quickly be ruinous in that state. There are these contrary principles in the hearts of believers, and if they labour not to be spiritually wise, how shall they be able to steer their course aright? Many men live in the dark as to themselves all their days; whatever else they know, they know not themselves. They know their outward estates, how rich they are; and the condition of their bodies as to health and sickness, they are careful to examine; but as to their inward man, and their principles as to God and eternity, they know little or nothing of themselves. Indeed few labour to grow wise in this matter, few study themselves as they ought, are acquainted with the evil of their own hearts as they ought, on which yet the whole course of their obedience, and consequently of their eternal condition, doth depend. This therefore is our wisdom, and it is a needful wisdom, if we have any design to please God, or to avoid that which is a provocation to the eyes of his glory.

We shall find also in our inquiry hereinto, what diligence and watchfulness is required unto a christian conversation. There is a constant enemy to it in every one's own heart; and what an enemy it is we shall afterwards show, for this is our design, to discover him to the uttermost. In the mean time, we may well bewail the woeful sloth and negligence that is in the most, even in professors. They live and walk as though they intended to go to heaven hoodwinked and asleep, as though they had no enemy to deal withal. Their mistake therefore, and folly, will be fully laid open in our progress.

That which I shall principally fix upon, in reference to our present design, from this place of the apostle,

is that which was first laid down, namely, *that there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling sin in believers, with a constant inclination and working towards evil.*

Awake, therefore, all of you in whose hearts is any thing of the ways of God. Your enemy is not only upon you, as on Samson of old, but is in you also. He is at work by all ways of force and craft, as we shall see. Would you not dishonour God and his gospel? would you not scandalize the saints and ways of God? would you not wound your consciences and endanger your souls? would you not grieve the good and holy Spirit of God, the author of all your comforts? would you keep your garments undefiled, and escape the woeful temptations and pollutions of the days wherein we live? would you be preserved from the number of the apostates in these latter days? Awake to the consideration of this cursed enemy, which is the spring of all these and innumerable other evils, as also of the ruin of all the souls that perish in this world.

CHAPTER II.

Indwelling sin a law. In what sense it is so called. What kind of law it is. An inward effective principle called a law. The power of sin thence evinced.

THAT which we have proposed unto consideration is the power and efficacy of indwelling sin. The ways whereby it may be evinced are many. I shall begin with the appellation of it in the place before mentioned: it is a law; "I find a law," saith the apostle

It is because of its power and efficacy that it is so called: so is also the principle of grace in believers the "law of the Spirit of life," Rom. viii. 2, as we observed before, which is the exceeding greatness of the power of God in them, Eph. i. 19. Where there is a law, there is power.

We shall therefore show both what belongs to it as it is a law in general, and also what is peculiar or proper in it as being such a law as we have described.

I. There are two things in general attending every law, as such.

1. Dominion; "the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth;" it lordeth it over a man, Rom. vii. 1. Where any law takes place, it hath dominion. It is properly the act of a superior, and it belongs to its nature to exact obedience by way of dominion. Now there is a two-fold dominion, as there is a two-fold law. There is a moral authoritative dominion over a man, and there is a real effective dominion in a man. The first is a property of the law of God, the latter of the law of sin. The law of sin hath not in itself a moral dominion; it hath not a rightful dominion or authority over any man, but it hath that which is equivalent to it; whence it is said, to reign as a king, Rom. vi. 12, and to lord it or have dominion, ver. 14, as a law in general is said to have, chap. vii. 1. But because it hath lost its complete dominion in reference to believers, of whom alone we speak, I shall not insist upon it in the utmost extent of its power. But even in them it is a law still, though not a law unto them. And though it have not a complete and as it were a rightful dominion over them, yet it will have a domination as to some things in them. It is still a law, and that in them, so that all its actings are the actings of a law; that is, it acts

with power, though it has lost its complete power of ruling in them. Though it be weakened, yet its nature is not changed; it is a law still, and therefore powerful. And as its particular workings, which we shall afterwards consider, are the ground of this appellation, so the term itself teacheth us in general what we are to expect from it, and what endeavours it will use for dominion, to which it hath been accustomed.

2. A law, as a law, hath an efficacy to provoke those that are obnoxious unto it to the things that it requireth. A law hath rewards and punishments accompanying it. These secretly prevail on them to whom they are proposed, though the things commanded be not much desirable. And generally, all laws have their efficacy on the minds of men from the rewards and punishments that are annexed to them. Nor is this law without this spring of power; it hath its rewards and punishments.

The pleasures of sin are the rewards of sin; a reward that most men lose their souls to obtain. By this the law of sin contended in Moses against the law of grace. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: for he looked unto the recompence of reward, Heb. xi. 25, 26. The contest was in his mind between the law of sin and the law of grace. The motive on the part of the law of sin, wherewith it sought to draw him over, and wherewith it prevails on the most, was the reward that it proposed to him, namely, that he should have the present enjoyment of the pleasures of sin. By this it contended against the reward annexed to the law of grace, called the recompence of reward.

By this sorry reward doth this law keep the world in obedience to its commands. And experience shows

us of what power it is to influence the minds of men. It hath also punishments that it threatens men with, who labour to cast off its yoke. Whatever evil, trouble, or danger in the world, attends gospel obedience; whatever hardship or violence is to be offered to the sensual part of our natures in a strict course of mortification; sin makes use of, as if they were punishments attending the neglect of its commands. By these it prevails on the fearful, who shall have no share in eternal life, Rev. xxi. 8. And it is hard to say by which of these, its pretended rewards, or pretended punishments, it doth most prevail; in which of them its great strength doth lie. By its rewards it enticeth men to sins of commission, as they are called, in ways and actions tending to the satisfaction of its lusts. By its punishments it induceth men to the omitting of duties, a course tending to a no less pernicious event than the former. By which of these the law of sin hath its greatest success in and upon the souls of men, is not evident, and that because they are seldom or never separated, but equally take place on the same persons. But this is certain, that by tenders and promises of the pleasures of sin on the one hand, by threats of the deprivation of all sensual contentments and the infliction of temporal evils on the other, it hath an exceeding efficacy on the minds of men, oftentimes of believers themselves. Unless a man be prepared to reject the reasonings that will offer themselves from the one and the other of these, there is no standing before the power of this law. The world falls before them every day. With what deceit and violence they are urged and imposed on the minds of men, we shall afterwards declare, as also what advantages they have to prevail upon them. Look on the generality of men, and you shall find them wholly, by

these means, at sin's disposal. Do the profits and pleasures of sin lie before them? nothing can withhold them from reaching after them. Do difficulties and inconveniences attend the duties of the gospel? they will have nothing to do with them, and so are wholly given up to the rule and dominion of this law.

And this light in general we have into the power and efficacy of indwelling sin, from the general nature of a law, whereof it is partaker.

II. We may consider what kind of law in particular it is; which will further evidence that power of it which we are inquiring after. It is not an outward, written, commanding, directing law; but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law. A law proposed unto us, is not to be compared for efficacy to a law inbred in us. Adam had a law of sin proposed to him in his temptation, but because he had no law of sin inbred and working in him, he might have withstood it. An inbred law must needs be effectual. Let us take an example from that law which is contrary to this law of sin. The law of God was at first inbred and natural to man; it was concreated with his faculties, and was their rectitude both in being and operation, in reference to man's end of living unto God and glorifying him. Hence it had an especial power in the whole soul, to enable it unto all obedience; yea, and to make all obedience easy and pleasant. Such is the power of an inbred law. And though this law, as to the rule and dominion of it, be now by nature cast out of the soul, yet the remaining sparks of it, because they are inbred, are very powerful and effectual, as the apostle declares, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Afterwards God renews this law, and writes it in tables of stone. But what is the efficacy of this law? Will it now, as it is external, and proposed unto men, enable them to per-

form the things that it exacts and requires? Not at all. God knew it would not, unless it were turned to an internal law again; that is, until from a moral outward rule, it be turned into an inward real principle. Wherefore God makes his law internal again, and implants it in the heart as it was at first, when he intends to give it power to produce obedience in his people; "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," Jer. xxxi. 31—33. This is that which God fixeth on, upon a discovery, as it were, of the insufficiency of an outward law leading men unto obedience. The written law, saith he, will not do it; mercies and deliverances from distress will not effect it; trials and afflictions will not accomplish it: then, saith the Lord, will I take another course; I will turn the written law into an internal living principle in their hearts, and that will have such an efficacy as shall assuredly make them my people, and keep them so. Now such is this law of sin; it is an indwelling law; "it is sin that dwelleth in me," Rom. vii. 17, 20. It is present with me, ver. 21. It is in my members, ver. 23: yea, it is so far in a man, as in some sense it is said to be the man himself; "I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) there dwelleth no good thing," ver. 18. The flesh, which is the seat and throne of this law, yea, which indeed is this law, is in some sense the man himself, as grace also is the new man. Now from this consideration of it, that it is an indwelling law inclining and moving to sin, as an inward habit or principle, it hath sundry advantages, increasing its strength, and furthering its power. As,

1. It always abides in the soul, it is never absent. The apostle twice useth that expression, "it dwelleth in me;" there is its constant residence and habitation.

If it came upon the soul only at certain seasons, much obedience might be perfectly accomplished in its absence. Yea, and as they deal with usurping tyrants whom they intend to thrust out of a city, the gates might be sometimes shut against it, that it might not return. The soul might fortify itself against it. But the soul is its home; there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always in you; in the best that you do, and in the worst. Men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. When they are in company, when alone, by night or by day, all is one, sin is with them. There is a living coal continually in their houses, which, if it be not looked unto, will fire them, and it may be consume them. Oh the woeful security of poor souls! How little do the most of men think of this inbred enemy, that is never from home! How little, for the most part, doth the watchfulness of any professors answer the danger of their state and condition!

2. It is always ready to apply itself to every end and purpose that it serves unto. It doth not only dwell in me, saith the apostle, but "when I would do good, it is present with me." There is somewhat more in that expression than mere indwelling. An inmate may dwell in a house, (that so we may keep to the allusion of indwelling used by the apostle,) and yet not be always meddling with what the good man of the house hath to do. But it is so with this law; it doth so dwell in us, as that it will be present with us in every thing we do: yea, oftentimes when with most earnestness we desire to be quit of it, with most violence it will put itself upon us; "when I would do good, it is present with me." Would you pray? would you hear? would you give alms? would you

meditate? would you be, in any duty, acting faith on God, and love towards him? would you work righteousness? would you resist temptations? This troublesome, perplexing indweller, will still more or less put itself upon you, and be present with you; so that you cannot perfectly and completely accomplish the thing that is good, as our apostle speaks, ver. 18. Sometimes men, by hearkening to their temptations, do stir up, excite, and provoke their lusts, and no wonder if then they find them present and active. But it will be so, when with all our endeavours we labour to be free from them. This law of sin dwells in us; that is, it adheres, as a depraved principle, to our minds in darkness and vanity, to our affections in sensuality, to our wills in a loathing of, and aversation from, that which is good; and by some, or more, or all of these, is continually putting itself upon us, in inclinations, motions, or suggestions to evil, when we would be most gladly quit of it.

3. It, being an indwelling law, applies itself to its work with great facility and easiness, like "the sin which doth so easily beset us," Heb. xii. 1. It hath a great facility and easiness in the application of itself unto its work; it needs no doors to be opened to it, it needs no engines to work by. The soul cannot apply itself to any duty of a man, but it must be by the exercise of those faculties wherein this law hath its residence. Is the understanding or the mind to be applied unto any thing? there it is, in ignorance, darkness, vanity, folly, madness. Is the will to be engaged? there it is also, in spiritual deadness, stubbornness, and the roots of obstinacy. Are the heart and affections to be set on work? there it is, in inclinations to the world, and present things, and sensuality, with proneness to all manner of defilements.

Hence it is easy for it to insinuate itself into all that we do, and to hinder all that is good, and to further all sin and wickedness. It hath an intimacy, an inwardness with the soul; and therefore, in all that we do, doth easily beset us. It possesseth those very faculties of the soul, whereby we must do what we do, whatever it be, good or evil. Now all these advantages it hath as it is a law, as an indwelling law; which manifests its power and efficacy. It is always resident in the soul, it puts itself upon all its actings, and that with easiness and facility.

This is that law, which the apostle affirms that he found in himself; this is the title that he gives to the powerful and effectual remainders of indwelling sin even in believers; and these general evidences of its power from that appellation, have we. Many there are in the world who find not this law in them; who, whatever they have been taught in the word, have not a spiritual sense and experience of the power of indwelling sin, and that because they are wholly under the dominion of it. They find not that there is darkness and folly in their minds, because they are darkness itself, and darkness will discover nothing. They find not deadness and an indisposition in their hearts and wills to God, because they are dead wholly in trespasses and sins. They are at peace with their lusts, by being in bondage unto them. And this is the state of most men in the world, which makes them woefully despise all their eternal concernments. Whence is it that men follow and pursue the world with so much greediness that they neglect heaven, and life, and immortality for it every day? Whence is it that some pursue their sensuality with delight, will drink, and revel, and have their sports, let others say what they please? Whence is it that so

many live so unprofitably under the word, that they understand so little of what is spoken to them, that they practise less of what they understand, and will by no means be stirred up to answer the mind of God in his calls unto them? It is all from this law of sin, and the power of it that rules and bears sway in men, that all these things do proceed; but it is not such persons of whom at present we particularly treat.

From what hath been spoken it will follow, that if there be such a law in believers, it is doubtless their duty to find it out, to find it so to be.

The more they find its power, the less they will feel its effects. It will not at all advantage a man to have a hectical distemper, and not discover it; a fire lying secretly in his house, and not to know it. So much as men find of this law in them, so much they will abhor it and themselves, and no more. Proportionably also to their discovery of it will be their earnestness for grace, nor will it rise higher: all watchfulness and diligence in obedience will be answerable also thereunto. Upon this one hinge, on finding out and experiencing the power and the efficacy of this law of sin, turns the whole course of our lives. Ignorance of it breeds senselessness, carelessness, sloth, security, and pride, all which the Lord's soul abhors. Eruptions into great, open, conscience-wasting, scandalous sins, are from want of a due spiritual consideration of this law. Inquire, then, how it is with your souls. What do you find of this law, what experience have you of its power and efficacy? Do you find it dwelling in you, always present with you, exciting itself, or putting forth its poison with facility and easiness, at all times, in all your duties, "when you would do good?" What humiliation, what self-abasement, what intenseness in prayer, what diligence, what watchful-

ness, doth this call for at your hands! What spiritual wisdom do you stand in need of! What supports of grace, what assistance of the Holy Ghost, will be hence also discovered. I fear we have, few of us, a diligence proportionable to our danger.

CHAPTER III.

The seat or subject of the law of sin the heart. What meant thereby. Properties of the heart as possessed by sin; unsearchable, deceitful. Whence that deceit ariseth. Improvements of these considerations.

HAVING shown indwelling sin, whereof we treat, in the remainders of it in believers, to be a law, and evinced in general the power of it from thence, we shall now proceed to give particular instances of its efficacy and advantages, from some things that generally relate to it as such. And these are three: FIRST, its seat and subject; SECOND, its natural properties; and THIRD, its operations, and the manner thereof, which principally we aim at, and shall attend unto.

FIRST. As for the seat and subject of the law of sin, the Scripture every where assigns it to be the heart. There indwelling sin keeps its special residence. It hath invaded and possessed the throne of God himself, "Madness is in the heart of men whilst they live," Eccl. ix. 3. This is their madness, or the root of all that madness which appears in their lives; "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphe-

mies," &c. Matt. xv. 19. There are many outward temptations and provocations that befall men, which excite and stir them up unto these evils. But they do but, as it were, open the vessel, and let out what is laid up and stored in it. The root, rise, and spring of all these things, is in the heart. Temptations and occasions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what was in him before. Hence is that summary description of the whole work and effect of this law of sin; "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5, and viii. 21. The whole work of the law of sin, from its first rise, its first coining of actual sin, is here described; and its seat, its work-house, is said to be the heart. And so it is called by our Saviour, the evil treasure of the heart; "An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil," Luke vi. 45. This treasure is the prevailing principle of moral actions that is in men. So in the beginning of the verse, our Saviour calls grace the good treasure of the heart of a good man, whence that which is good doth proceed. It is a principle constantly and abundantly inciting and stirring up unto, and consequently bringing forth, actions conformable and like to it, of the same kind and nature with itself. And it is also called a treasure for its abundance. It will never be exhausted; it is not wasted by men's spending of it: yea, the more lavish men are of this stock, the more they draw out of this treasure, the more it grows and abounds: as men do not spend their grace, but increase it, by its exercise, no more do they their indwelling sin. The more men exercise their grace in duties of obedience, the more it is strengthened and increased. And the more men exert and put forth the fruits of their lust, the more is that enraged and increased in

them. It feeds upon itself, swallows up its own poison, and grows thereby. The more men sin, the more they are inclined to sin. It is from the deceitfulness of this law of sin, whereof we shall speak afterwards at large, that men persuade themselves that by this or that particular sin, they shall so satisfy their lusts, as that they shall need to sin no more. Every sin increaseth the principle and fortifieth the habit of sinning. It is an evil treasure that increaseth by doing evil. And where doth this treasure lie? It is in the heart; there it is laid up, there it is kept in safety. All the men in the world, all the angels in heaven, cannot dispossess a man of this treasure, it is so safely stored in the heart.

"The heart" is variously used in the Scripture; sometimes for the mind and understanding, sometimes for the will, sometimes for the affections, sometimes for the conscience, sometimes for the whole soul. Generally it denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it; not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil. The mind, as it inquireth, discerneth, and judgeth, what is to be done, what refused; the will, as it chooseth, or refuseth and avoids; the affections, as they like or dislike, cleave to or have an aversation from, that which is proposed to them; the conscience, as it warns and determines; these are altogether called the heart. And in this sense it is that we say, the seat and subject of this law of sin is the heart of man. Only we may add, that the Scripture, speaking of the heart as the principle of men's good or evil actions, doth usually insinuate together with it two things belonging unto the manner of their performance.

One is, a suitableness and pleasingness to the soul

in the things that are done. When men take delight in and are pleased with what they do, they are said to do it heartily, with their whole hearts. Thus, when God himself blesseth his people with love and delight, he says he doth it with his whole heart, and his whole soul, Jer. xxxii. 41.

The other is, resolution and constancy in such actions. And this also is denoted in the metaphorical expression of a treasure, before used, from whence men do constantly take out the things which either they stand in need of, or do intend to use.

This is the subject, the seat, the dwelling-place of this law of sin; the heart, as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil, as out of it proceeds good or evil. Here dwells our enemy; this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion against God all our days. Sometimes it hath more strength, and consequently more success; sometimes less of the one than of the other; but it is always in rebellion whilst we live.

That we may in our passage take a little view of the strength and power of sin from this seat and subject of it, we may consider one or two properties of the heart that exceedingly contribute thereunto. It is like an enemy in war, whose strength and power lie not only in his numbers and force of men or arms, but also in the unconquerable forts that he doth possess. And such is the heart to this enemy of God and our souls, as will appear from the properties of it, whereof one or two shall be mentioned.

I. It is unsearchable; "Who can know the heart? I the Lord search it," Jer. xvii. 9, 10. The heart of man is pervious to God only; hence he takes the honour of searching the heart to be as peculiar to himself, and as fully declaring him to be God, as any

other glorious attribute of his nature. We know not the hearts of one another, we know not our own hearts as we ought. Many there are that know not their hearts as to their general bent and disposition, whether that be good or bad, sincere and sound or corrupt and naught: but no one knoweth all the secret intrigues, the windings and turnings, the actings and aversations of his own heart. Hath any one the perfect measure of his own light and darkness? Can any one know what actings, of choosing or aversation, his will will bring forth, upon the proposal of that endless variety of objects that it is to be exercised with? Can any one traverse the various mutability of his affections? Do the secret springs of acting and refusing in the soul lie before the eyes of any man? Doth any one know what will be the motions of the mind or will, in such and such conjunctions of things? Such a suiting of objects, such a pretension of reasonings, such an appearance of things desirable! All in heaven and earth, but the infinite all-seeing God, are utterly ignorant of these things. In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin; and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out. We fight with an enemy whose secret strength we cannot discover, whom we cannot follow into its retirements. Hence oftentimes, when we are ready to think sin quite ruined, after a while we find it was but out of sight. It hath coverts and retreats in an unsearchable heart, whither we cannot pursue it. The soul may persuade itself all is well, when sin may be safe in the hidden darkness of the mind, which it is impossible that it should look into for whatever makes manifest is light. It may suppose the will of sinning is utterly taken away, when yet there is an unsearchable reserve for a more suitable

object, a more vigorous temptation than at present it is tried withal. Hath a man had a contest with any lust, and a blessed victory over it by the Holy Ghost, as to that present trial? when he thinks it is utterly expelled, he ere long finds that it was but retired out of sight. It can lie so close in the mind's darkness, in the will's indisposition, in the disorder and carnality of the affections, that no eye can discover it. The best of our wisdom is but to watch its first appearances, to catch its first under-ground heavings and workings, and to set ourselves in opposition to them: for to follow it into the secret corners of the heart, that we cannot do. It is true, there is yet a relief in this case, namely, that he to whom the work of destroying the law of sin and body of death in us, is principally committed, namely, the Holy Ghost, comes with his axe to the very root; neither is there any thing in an unsearchable heart that is not open and naked unto him, Heb. iv. 13. But we, in a way of duty, may hence see what an enemy we have to deal withal.

II. As it is unsearchable, so it is deceitful, as in the place above mentioned; it is "deceitful above all things," incomparably so. There is great deceit in the dealings of men in the world; great in their counsels and contrivances in reference to their affairs, private and public; great deceit in their words and actings; the world is full of deceit and fraud. But all this is nothing to the deceit that is in man's heart toward himself; for that is the meaning of the expression in this place, and not toward others. Now incomparable deceitfulness, added to unsearchableness, gives a great addition and increase of strength to the law of sin on the account of its seat and subject. I speak not yet of the deceitfulness of sin itself, but the deceitfulness of the heart where it is seated: "There

are seven abominations in the heart," Prov. xxvi. 25; that is, not only many, but an absolute complete number, as seven denotes. And they are such abominations as consist in deceitfulness; so the caution foregoing insinuates, "trust him not;" for it is only deceit that should make us not to trust in that degree and measure which the object is capable of.

Now this deceitfulness of the heart, whereby it is exceedingly advantaged in its harbouring of sin, lies chiefly in these two things.

1. That it abounds in contradictions, so that it is not to be found and dealt with according to any constant rule and way of procedure. There are some men that have much of this from their natural constitution, or from other causes in their conversation. They seem to be made up of contradictions; sometimes to be very wise in their affairs, sometimes very foolish; very open, and very reserved; very pliant, and very obstinate; very easy to be entreated, and very revengeful; all in a remarkable height. This is generally accounted a bad character, and is seldom found but when it proceeds from some notable predominant lust. But in general, in respect of moral good or evil, duty or sin, it is so with the heart of every man; flaming hot, and key cold; weak, and yet stubborn; obstinate and facile. The frame of the heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. Now, you would think you had it all for such a frame, such a way; anon, it is quite otherwise; so that none know what to expect from it. The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God and his will; the will answered, in its choice of good, the discovery made of it by the

mind; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding and will. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the wheels in it. That being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another; the will chooseth not the good which the mind discovers; the affections delight not in that which the will chooseth; but all jar and interfere, cross and rebel against each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence, sometimes the will leads, the judgment follows. Yea, commonly, the affections, that should attend upon all, get the sovereignty, and draw the whole soul captive after them. And hence it is, as I said, that the heart is made up of so many contradictions in its actings. Sometimes the mind retains its sovereignty, and the affections are in subjection, and the will ready for its duty. This puts a good face upon things. Immediately, the rebellion of the affections, or the obstinacy of the will, takes place and prevails, and the whole scene is changed. This, I say, makes the heart deceitful above all things; it agrees not at all in itself, is not constant to itself, hath no order that it is constant unto, is under no certain conduct that is stable, but, if I may so say, hath a rotation in itself, where ofttimes the feet lead and guide the whole.

2. Its deceit lies in its full promisings upon the first appearance of things. And this also proceeds from the same principle with the former. Sometimes the affections are touched and wrought upon; the whole heart appears in a fair frame; all promiseth to be well. Within a while the whole frame is changed: the mind was not at all affected or turned; the affections a little acted their parts and are gone off, and all the fair promises of the heart are departed with them.

Now add this deceitfulness to the unsearchableness before mentioned, and we shall find, at least, that the difficulty of dealing effectually with sin, in its seat and throne, will be exceedingly increased. A deceiving and a deceived heart, who can deal with it? especially considering that the heart employs all its deceits unto the service of sin, contributes them all to its furtherance. All the disorder that is in the heart, all its false promises and fair appearances, promote the interest and advantage of sin. Hence God cautions the people to look to it, lest "their own hearts should entice and deceive them."

Who can mention the treacheries and deceits that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost so expresseth it, "it is deceitful above all things," uncertain in what it doth, and false in what it promiseth. And hence moreover it is, among other causes, that in the pursuit of our war against sin, we have not only the old work to go over and over, but new work still, while we live in this world; still new stratagems and wiles to deal withal, as the manner will be where unsearchableness and deceitfulness are to be contended with.

There are many other properties of this seat and subject of the law of sin, which might be insisted on to the same end and purpose; but that would too far divert us from our particular design, and therefore I shall pass these over with some few considerations.

Never let us reckon that our work in contending against sin, in crucifying, mortifying, and subduing it, is at an end. The place of its habitation is unsearchable; and when we may think that we have thoroughly won the field, there is still some reserve remaining that we saw not, that we knew not of. Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory, and many have been spiritually wounded after great

successes against this enemy. David was so; his great surprise into sin was after a long profession, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping of himself from his iniquity. And hence, in part, hath it come to pass, that the profession of many hath declined in their old age, or riper time, which must more distinctly be spoken to afterwards. They have given over the work of mortifying sin, before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation, but by being endless in our pursuit. And that command of the apostle, which we have, Col. iii. 5, is on this account as necessary for them to observe who are towards the end of their race, as those that are but at the beginning of it; "Mortify therefore your members that are on the earth:" be always doing it whilst you live in this world. It is true, great ground is obtained when the work is vigorously and constantly carried on; sin is much weakened, so that the soul presseth forward towards perfection. But yet the work must be endless, I mean whilst we are in this world. If we give over, we shall quickly see this enemy exerting itself with new strength and vigour. It may be, that under some great affliction, it may be, that in some eminent enjoyment of God, in the sense of the sweetness of blessed communion with Christ, we have been ready to say that there was an end of sin, that it was dead and gone for ever. But have we not found the contrary by experience? Hath it not manifested that it was only retired into some unsearchable recesses of the heart, as to its inbeing and nature, though it may be greatly weakened in its power? Let us then reckon on it, that there is no way to have our work done but by always doing of it; and he who dies fighting in this warfare, dies assuredly a conqueror.

Again; hath it its residence in that which is various, inconstant, deceitful above all things? this calls for perpetual watchfulness against it. An open enemy that deals by violence only, always gives some respite; you know where to have him, and what he is doing, so as that sometimes you may sleep quietly without fear; but against adversaries that deal by deceit and treachery, (which are long swords, and reach at the greatest distance,) nothing will give security but perpetual watchfulness. It is impossible we should in this case be too jealous, doubtful, suspicious, or watchful. The heart hath a thousand wiles and deceits, and if we are in the least off from our watch, we may be sure to be surprised. Hence are those reiterated commands and cautions given for watching, for being circumspect, diligent, careful, and the like. There is no living for them who have to deal with an enemy deceitful above all things, unless they persist in such a frame. All cautions that are given in this case are necessary, especially that, Remember not to believe it. Doth thy heart promise fair? rest not on it; but say to the Lord Christ, Lord, do thou undertake for me. Doth the sun shine fair in the morning? reckon not therefore on a fair day; the clouds may arise and fall: though the morning give a fair appearance of serenity and peace, turbulent affections may arise, and cloud the soul with sin and darkness.

Further then; commit the whole matter with all care and diligence unto him who can search the heart to the uttermost, and knows how to prevent all its treacheries and deceits. In the things before mentioned lies our duty, but here lies our safety. There is no treacherous corner in our hearts, but he can search it to the uttermost; there is no deceit in them, but he can disappoint it. This course David takes,

Psa. cxxxix.: after he had set forth the omnipresence of God, and his omniscience, (ver. 8—10,) he makes improvement of it, ver. 23, "Search me, O Lord, and try me." As if he had said, It is but little that I know of my deceitful heart, only I would be sincere, I would not have reserves for sin retained therein; wherefore do thou, who art present with my heart, who knowest my thoughts long before, undertake this work, perform it thoroughly, for thou alone art able so to do.

There are yet other arguments for the evidencing of the power and strength of indwelling sin, from whence it is termed a law, which we must pass through according to the order wherein before we laid them down.

CHAPTER IV.

Indwelling sin enmity against God. Thence its power. Admits of no peace nor rest: is against God himself: acts itself in aversation from God, and propensity to evil. Is universal: to all of God; in all of the soul: constant.

We have seen the seat and subject of this law of sin. In the SECOND place we might take a view of its nature in general, which also will manifest its power and efficacy. But this I shall not enlarge upon, it being not my business to declare the nature of indwelling sin; it hath also been done by others.

I shall therefore only, in reference to our special design in hand, consider one property of it that belongs unto its nature, and this always wherever it is. And this is that which is expressed by the apostle, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii.

7. That which is here called "the carnal mind," or "the wisdom of the flesh," is the same with the law of sin which we insist on. And what says he hereof? why, it is "enmity against God."

I. It is not only an enemy, (for so possibly some reconciliation of it unto God might be made,) but it is enmity itself, and not capable of accepting any terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Yea, the only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy the enmity. So the apostle in another case tells us, we who were enemies are reconciled unto God, Rom. v. 10: that is a work compassed and brought about by the blood of Christ, the reconciling of the greatest enemies. But when he comes to speak of enmity, there is no way for it but it must be abolished and destroyed, "having abolished in his flesh the enmity," Eph. ii. 15: there is no way to deal with any enmity whatever, but by its abolition or destruction.

And this also belongs to it as enmity, that every part and parcel of it, if we may so speak, the least degree of it that can possibly remain in any one, whilst and where there is any thing of its nature, is enmity still. It may not be so effectual and powerful in operation as where it hath more life and vigour, but it is enmity still. As every drop of poison is poison, and will infect; as every spark of fire is fire, and will burn; so is every thing of the law of sin, the last, the least of it; it is enmity, it will poison, it will burn. That which is any thing in the abstract, is still so whilst it hath any being at all. Our apostle, who may well be supposed to have made as great a progress in the subduing of it as any one on the earth, yet after all cries out for deliverance, as from an irreconcilable enemy, Rom. vii. 24. The meanest acting, the

meanest and most imperceptible working of it, is the acting and working of enmity. Mortification abates its force, but doth not change its nature. Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin. Whatever effect be wrought upon it, there is no effect wrought in it, but that it is enmity still, sin still. This then, by it, is our state and condition. "God is love," 1 John iv. 8. He is so in himself, eternally excellent and desirable above all. He is so to us; he is so in the blood of his Son, and in all the inexpressible fruits of it, by which we are what we are, and in which all our future hopes and expectations are wrapped up. Against this God we carry about us an enmity all our days. An enmity that hath this from its nature, that it is incapable of cure or reconciliation. Destroyed it may be, it shall be, but cured it cannot be. If a man have an enemy to deal with that is too mighty for him, as David had with Saul, he may take the course that he did, consider what it is that provoked his enemy against him, and so address himself to remove the cause and make up his peace; "If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord," 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Come it from God or man, there are yet hopes of peace. But when a man hath enmity itself to deal withal, nothing is to be expected but continual fighting to the destruction of one party. If enmity be not overcome and destroyed, it will overcome and destroy the soul.

And here lies no small part of its power which we are inquiring after; it can admit of no terms of peace, of no composition. There may be a composition where there is no reconciliation; there may be a truce where there is no peace. But with this enemy we

can obtain neither the one nor the other. It is never quiet, whether conquering or conquered; which was the only kind of enemy of whom the famous warrior of old complained. It is in vain for a man to have any expectation of rest from his lust, but by its death; of absolute freedom, but by his own. Some, in the tumultuating of their corruptions, seek for quietness by labouring to satisfy them, "making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," as the apostle speaks, Rom. xiii. 14. This is to slake fire by wood and oil. As all the fuel in the world, all the fabric of the creation that is combustible, being cast into the fire, will not at all satisfy it but increase it; so is it with satisfaction given to sin by sinning, it doth but inflame and increase it. If a man will part with some of his goods unto an enemy, it may satisfy him; but enmity will have all, and is not one whit more satisfied than if he had received nothing at all: like the lean cattle, that were nevertheless hungry for having devoured the fat. You cannot bargain with the fire to take but so much of your houses; ye have no way but to quench it. It is in this case as it is in the contest between a wise man and a fool, "whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest," Prov. xxix. 9; whatever frame or temper he be in, his importunate folly makes him troublesome. It is so with this indwelling sin, whether it rage or laugh: whether it violently tumultuate, as it will do on provocations and temptations, it will be outrageous in the soul: and whether it seem to be pleased and contented, to be satisfied, all is one, there is no peace, no rest to be had with it or by it. Had it, then, been of any other nature, some other way might have been fixed on; but being that it consists in enmity, all the relief the soul hath must lie in its ruin.

II. It is not only said to be enmity, but it is said to be enmity against God. It hath chosen a great enemy indeed. It is in sundry places proposed as our enemy; "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. They are enemies to the soul, that is, to ourselves. Sometimes it is proposed as an enemy to the Spirit; "the flesh lusteth" or fighteth "against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17. It fights against the Spirit, or the spiritual principle that is in us, to conquer it; it fights against our souls to destroy them. It hath special ends and designs against our souls, and against the principle of grace that is in us; but its proper formal object is God; it is enmity against God. It is its work to oppose grace; it is a consequent of its work to oppose our souls, which follows upon what it doth, more than what it intends; but its nature and formal design is to oppose God. God as the Lawgiver, God as holy, God as the author of the gospel, a way of salvation by grace and not by works; is the direct object of the law of sin. Why doth it oppose duty, so that "the good we would do, we do not," either as to matter or manner? Why doth it render the soul carnal, indisposed, unbelieving, unspiritual, weary, wandering? It is because of its enmity to God, whom the soul aims to have communion with in duty. It hath, as it were, that command from Satan, which the assyrians had from their king, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel," 1 Kings xxii. 31. It is neither great nor small, but God himself, the King of Israel, that sin sets itself against. There lies the secret formal reason of all its opposition to good, even because it relates unto God. May a road, a trade, a way of duties be set up, where communion with God is not aimed at, but only the duty itself, as is the

manner of men in most of their superstitious worship? the opposition that will lie against it from the law of sin will be very weak, easy, and gentle. Or, as the assyrians assaulted Jehoshaphat, because of his show of a king, but when they found that it was not Ahab, they turned back from pursuing of him; so, because there is a show and appearance of the worship of God, sin may make head against it at first, but, when the duty cries out in the heart that indeed God is not there, sin turns away to seek out its proper enemy, even God himself, elsewhere. And hence do many poor creatures spend their days in dismal tiring superstitions, without any great reluctancy from within, when others cannot be suffered freely to watch with Christ, in a spiritual manner, one hour. And it is no wonder that men fight with carnal weapons for their superstitious worship without, when they have no fighting against it within. For God is not in it; and the law of sin makes not opposition to any duty, but to God in every duty. This is our state and condition: all the opposition that ariseth in us unto any thing that is spiritually good, whether it be from darkness in the mind, or aversation in the will, or sloth in the affections; all the secret arguings and reasonings that are in the soul in pursuit of them; the direct object of them is God himself. The enmity lies against him, which consideration surely should influence us to a perpetual, constant watchfulness over ourselves.

It is thus also in respect of all propensity unto sin, as well as aversation from God. It is God himself that is aimed at. It is true, the pleasures, the wages of sin, do greatly influence the sensual, carnal affections of men; but it is the holiness and authority of God that sin itself rises up against. It hates the yoke of the Lord; "Thou hast been weary of me," saith

God to sinners, and that during their performance of abundance of duties. Every act of sin is a fruit of being weary of God. Thus Job tells us what lies at the bottom in the heart of sinners; "they say to the Lord, Depart from us:" it is enmity against him, and aversation from him. Here lies the formal nature of every sin; it is an opposition to God, a casting off his yoke, a breaking off the dependence which the creature ought to have on the Creator. And the apostle gives the reason why he affirms the carnal mind to be enmity against God, namely, because "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. It never is, nor will, nor can be, subject to God, its whole nature consisting in an opposition to him. The soul wherein it is, may be subject to the law of God, but this law of sin sets up in contrariety to it, and will not be in subjection.

To manifest a little further the power of this law of sin, from this property of its nature that it is enmity against God, one or two inseparable adjuncts of it may be considered, which will further evince it.

1. It is universal. Some contentions are limited to some particular concerns; this is about one thing, that about another. It is not so here; the enmity is absolute and universal, as are all enmities that are grounded in the nature of the things themselves. Such enmity is against the whole kind of that which is its object. Such is this enmity: for, I. It is universal to all of God; and, II. It is universal in all of the soul.

(1.) It is universal to all of God. If there were any thing of God, his nature, properties, his mind or will, his law or gospel, any duty of obedience to him, of communion with him, that sin had not an enmity against, the soul might have a constant shelter and

retreat within itself, by applying itself to that of God, to that of duty towards him, to that of communion with him, that sin would make no opposition against. But the enmity lies against God, and all of God, and every thing wherein or whereby we have to do with him. It is not subject to the law, nor any part or parcel, word or tittle, of the law. Whatever is opposite to any thing as such, is opposite unto all of it. Sin is enmity to God as God, and therefore to all of God. Not his goodness, not his holiness, not his mercy, not his grace, not his promises; there is not any thing of him which it doth not make head against; nor any duty, private, public, in the heart, in external works, which it opposeth not. And the nearer, if I may so say, any thing is to God, the greater is its enmity unto it; the more of spirituality and holiness is in any thing, the greater is its enmity. That which hath most of God, hath most of its opposition. Concerning them in whom this law is predominant, God says, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof," Prov. i. 25. Not this or that part of God's counsel, of his mind or will, is opposed, but all his counsel, whatever he calleth for, or guideth unto, in every particular of it; all is set at nought, and nothing of his reproof attended to. A man would think it not very strange that sin should maintain an enmity against God in his law, which comes to judge it, to condemn it: but it raiseth a greater enmity against him in his gospel, wherein he tenders mercy and pardon as a deliverance from it; and that merely because more of the glorious properties of God's nature, more of his excellences and condescension, is manifested therein than in the other.

(2.) It is universal in all of the soul. Would this law of sin have contented itself to have subdued any

one faculty of the soul; would it have left any one at liberty, any one affection free from its yoke and bondage; it might possibly have been with more ease opposed or subdued. But when Christ comes with his spiritual power upon the soul to conquer it himself, he hath no quiet landing place. He can set foot on no ground but what he must fight for and conquer. Not the mind, not an affection, not the will, but all is secured against him. And when grace hath made its entrance, yet sin will dwell in all its coasts. Were any thing in the soul at perfect freedom and liberty, there a stand might be made to drive it from all the rest of its holds: but it is universal, and wars in the whole soul. The mind hath its own darkness and vanity to wrestle with; the will its own stubbornness, obstinacy, and perverseness; every affection its own frowardness, and aversation from God, and its sensuality, to deal withal: so that one cannot yield relief unto another, as they ought; they have, as it were, their hands full at home. Hence it is that our knowledge is imperfect, our obedience weak, love not unmixed, fear not pure, delight not free and noble. But I must not insist on these particulars, or I could abundantly show how diffused this principle of enmity against God is through the whole soul.

2. Hereunto might be added its constancy. It is constant unto itself, it wavers not, it hath no thoughts of yielding or giving over, notwithstanding the powerful opposition that is made unto it both by the law and gospel, as afterwards shall be showed.

This then is a third evidence of the power of sin, taken from its nature and properties, wherein I have fixed but on one instance for its illustration, namely, that it is enmity against God, and that universal and constant. Should we enter upon a full description or

it, it would require more space and time than we have allotted to this whole subject. What hath been delivered may give us a little sense of it, if it be the will of God, and stir us up unto watchfulness. What can be of more sad consideration, than that we should carry about us constantly that which is enmity against God, and that not in this or that particular, but in all that he is, and in all wherein he hath revealed himself. I cannot say it is well with them who find it not. It is well with them, indeed, in whom it is weakened, and the power of it abated. But yet for them who say it is not in them, they do but "deceive themselves, and there is no truth in them."

CHAPTER V.

Nature of sin further discovered, as it is enmity against God. Its aversation from all good opened. Means to prevent the effects of it prescribed.

We have considered somewhat of the nature of indwelling sin, not absolutely, but in reference to the discovery of its power. But this more clearly evidenceth itself,

Thirdly, In its actings and operations. Power is an act of life, and operation is the only discoverer of life. We know not that any thing lives, but by the effects and works of life. And great and strong operations discover a powerful and vigorous life. Such are the operations of this law of sin, which are all demonstrations of its power.

That which we have declared concerning its nature is, that it consists in enmity. Now there are two general heads of the working or operation of enmity:

First, Aversation. Our Saviour, describing the enmity that was between himself and the teachers of the jews by the effects of it, saith, in the prophet, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me," Zech. xi. 8. Where there is mutual enmity, there is mutual aversation, loathing, and abomination. So it was between the jews and the samaritans; they were enemies, and abhorred one another, John iv. 9. *Second*, Opposition, or contending against one another, is the next product of enmity; "He was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them," Isa. lxiii. 10, speaking of God towards the people. Where there is enmity there will be fighting; it is the proper and natural product of it. Now both these effects are found in this law of sin.

First, For aversation; there is an aversation in it unto God, and every thing of God, as we have in part discovered in handling the enmity itself, and so shall not need much to insist upon again. All indisposition unto duty wherein communion with God is to be obtained, all weariness of duty, all carnality, all formality under duty; it all springs from this root. The wise man cautions us against this evil; "Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God," Eccles. v. 1. Hast thou any spiritual duty to perform, and dost thou design the attaining any communion with God? look to thyself; take care of thy affections; they will be gadding and wandering, and that from their aversation to what thou hast in hand. There is not any good that we would do, wherein we may not find this aversation exercising itself. "When I would do good, evil is present with me:" at any time, at all times, when I would do any thing that is spiritually good, it is present; that is, to hinder me, to obstruct me in my duty; because it abhors and loathes the thing

which I have in hand, it will keep me off from it if it be possible. In them in whom it prevails, it comes at length unto that frame which is expressed in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 31. It will allow an outward bodily presence unto the worship of God, wherein it is not concerned, but it keeps the heart quite away.

It may be, some will pretend, they find it not so in themselves, but they have freedom and liberty in and unto all the duties of obedience that they attend to. But I fear this pretended liberty will be found, upon examination, to arise from one or both of these causes: first, ignorance of the true state and condition of their own souls, of their inward man and its actings towards God. They know not how it is with them, and therefore are not to be believed in what they report. They are in the dark, and neither know what they do, nor whither they are going. It is probable the pharisee knew little of this matter, which made him boast of his duties to God himself. Or, secondly, it may be that whatever duties of worship or obedience such persons perform, they may, through want of faith and an interest in Christ, have no communion with God in them. And if so, sin will make but little opposition unto them therein. We speak of those whose hearts are exercised with these things: and if, under their complaints of them, and groanings for deliverance from them, others cry out unto them, Stand off, we are holier than ye, they are willing to bear their condition, as knowing that their way may be safe though it be troublesome, and being willing to see their own dangers, that they may avoid the ruin which others fall into.

Let us then a little consider this aversation, in such acts of obedience as wherein there is no concernment but that of God and the soul. In public duties there

may be a mixture of other considerations: they may be so influenced by custom and necessity, that a right judgment cannot, from them, be made of this matter. But let us take into consideration the duties of retirement, as private prayer, and meditation, and the like; or else extraordinary duties, or duties to be performed in an extraordinary manner.

I. In these will this aversation and loathing oftentimes discover itself in the affections. A secret striving will be in them about close and cordial dealing with God. Even when convictions, sense of duty, dear and real esteem of God, and communion with him, have carried the soul into its closet, yet, unless the hand of God in his Spirit be high and strong upon the soul, unless there be the vigour and power of a spiritual life constantly at work, there will be a secret loathness in them unto duty; yea, sometimes there will be a violent inclination to the contrary, so that the soul had rather do any thing, embrace any diversion, though it wound itself thereby, than vigorously apply itself unto that which in the inward man it breathes after. It is weary before it begins, and says, When will the work be over? Here God and the soul are immediately concerned, and it is a great conquest to do what we would, though we come exceedingly short of what we should do.

II. It discovers itself in the mind also. When we address ourselves to God in Christ, we are, as Job speaks, xxiii. 4, "to fill our mouths with arguments," that we may be able to plead with him, as he calls upon us to do, Isa. xliii. 26, "Put me in remembrance: let us plead together." Whence the church is called upon to take unto itself words, or arguments, in going to God, Hos. xiv. 2. The sum is, that the mind should be furnished with the considerations that are

prevailing with God, and be in readiness to plead them, and to manage them in the most spiritual manner to the best advantage. Now is there no difficulty to get the mind into such a frame as to lay out itself to the utmost in this work? to be clear, steady, and constant in its duty? to draw out, and make use of, its stores and furniture of promises and experiences? It starts, wanders, flags, and all from this secret aversation unto communion with God, which proceeds from the law of indwelling sin. Some complain that they can make no work of meditation, they cannot bend their minds unto it. I confess there may be a great cause of this in their want of a right understanding of the duty itself, and of the ways of managing the soul in it, which therefore I shall a little speak to afterwards. But yet this secret enmity hath also its hand in the loss they are at, and that both in their minds and in their affections. Others are forced to live in family and public duties, they find such little benefit and success in private. And here hath been the beginning of the apostasy of many professors, and the source of many foolish sensual opinions. Finding this aversation in their minds and affections to closeness and constancy in private spiritual duties, and not knowing how to conquer and prevail against these difficulties through Him who enables us, they have at first been subdued to a neglect of them, first partial, then total; until, having lost all conscience of them, they have had a door opened unto all sin and licentiousness, and so to a full and utter apostasy. I am persuaded there are very few that apostatize from a profession of any continuance, such as our days abound with, but their door of entrance into the folly of backsliding was either some great and notorious sin, that bloodied their consciences, tainted their affections,

and intercepted all delight of having any thing more to do with God, or else it was a course of neglect in private duties, arising from a weariness of contending against that powerful aversation which they found in themselves unto them. And this also, through the craft of Satan, hath been improved into many foolish and sensual opinions, of living unto God, without, and above, any duties of communion. And we find, that after men have, for a while, choked and blinded their consciences with this pretence, cursed wickedness or sensuality hath been the end of their folly. And the reason of all this is, that the giving way to the law of sin, in the least, is the giving strength to it; to let it alone, is to let it grow; not to conquer it, is to be conquered by it.

As it is in respect of private, so it is also in respect of public duties that have any thing extraordinary in them. What strivings, strugglings, and pleadings, are there in the heart about them, especially against the spirituality of them! Yea, in and under them, will not the mind and the affections sometimes be entangled with things uncouth, new, and strange unto them, such as at the time of the least serious business a man would not deign to take into his thoughts. But if the least loose liberty or advantage be given unto indwelling sin, if it be not perpetually watched over, it will work to a strange and an unexpected issue. In brief, let the soul unclothe any duty whatever, private or public, any thing that is called good; let a man divest it of all outward respects, which secretly insinuate themselves into the mind, and give it some complacency in what it is about, but do not render it acceptable unto God; and he shall assuredly find somewhat of the power, and some of the effects of this aversation. It begins in loathness and indisposition,

goes on with entangling the mind and affections with other things, and will end, if not prevented, in weariness of God, which he complains of in his people, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel," Isa. xliii. 22. They ceased from duty, because they were weary of God.

But this instance being of great importance to professors in their walking with God, we must not pass it over without some intimations or directions for them in their contending against it and opposition to it. Only this must be premised, that I am not giving directions for the mortifying of indwelling sin in general, which is to be done alone by the Spirit of Christ, by virtue of our union with him; but only for our particular duty with reference to this especial evil or effect of indwelling sin which we have a little insisted on; or for what, in this single case, the wisdom of faith seems to direct unto, and call for. And this will be our way and course in our progress upon the consideration of other effects of it.

[1.] The great means to prevent the fruits and effects of this aversation, is the constant keeping of the soul in a universally holy frame. As this weakens the whole law of sin, so, answerably, all its properties; and particularly, this aversation. It is this frame only that will enable us to say with the psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed," Psa. lvii. 7. It is utterly impossible to keep the heart in a prevailing holy frame in any one duty, unless it be so in and unto all and every one. If sin entanglements get hold in any one thing, they will put themselves upon the soul in every thing. A constant even frame and temper in all duties, in all ways, is the only preservative for any one way. Let not him who is neglectful in public, persuade himself that all will be clear and easy

in private, or the contrary. There is a harmony in obedience; break but one part, and you interrupt the whole. Our wounds in particular, arise generally from negligence as to the whole course. So David informs us, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psa. cxix. 6. A universal respect to all God's commandments, is the only preservative from shame. And nothing have we more reason to be ashamed of than the shameful miscarriages of our hearts in point of duty, which are from the principle before mentioned.

[2.] Labour to prevent the very beginnings of the workings of this aversation: let grace be beforehand with it in every duty. We are directed to "watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7; and as it is unto prayer, so unto every duty; that is, to consider and take care that we be not hindered from within nor from without as to a due performance of it. Watch against temptations, to oppose them; watch against the aversation that is in sin, to prevent it. As we are not to give place to Satan, no more are we to sin. If it be not prevented in its first attempts, it will prevail. My meaning is, whatever good, as the apostle speaks, we have to do, and find evil present with us, (as we shall find it present,) prevent its parleying with the soul, its insinuating of poison into the mind and affections, by a vigorous, holy, violent stirring up of the grace or graces that are to be acted and set at work peculiarly in that duty. Let Jacob come first into the world; or if prevented by the violence of Esau, let him lay hold on his heel to overthrow him, and obtain the birthright. Upon the very first motion of Peter to our Saviour, crying, "Master, spare thyself," he immediately replies, "Get thee behind me, Satan." So ought we to say, Get thee gone, thou law of sin, thou present

evil; and it may be of the same use to us. Get grace, then, up betimes unto duty, and be early in the rebukes of sin.

[3.] Though it do its worst, yet be sure it never prevail to a conquest. Be sure you be not wearied out by its pertinacity, nor driven from your hold by its importunity; do not faint by its opposition. Take the apostle's advice, "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that ye be not slothful," Heb. vi. 11. Still hold out in the same diligence. There are many ways whereby men are driven from a constant holy performance of duties, all of them dangerous, if not pernicious to the soul. Some are diverted by business, some by company, some by the power of temptations, some discouraged by their own darkness; but none so dangerous as this, when the soul gives over, in part or in whole, as wearied by the aversation of sin unto it, or to communion with God in it. This argues the soul's giving up of itself unto the power of sin, which, unless the Lord break the snare of Satan therein, will assuredly prove ruinous. Our Saviour's instruction is, that we ought "always to pray, and not to faint," Luke xviii. 1. Opposition will arise, none so bitter and keen as that from our own hearts; if we faint, we perish. Take heed "lest ye be wearied," saith the apostle, "and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 3. Such a fainting as is attended with a weariness, and that with a giving place to the aversation working in our hearts, is to be avoided, if we would not perish. The caution is the same with that of the same apostle, "rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer," Rom. xii. 12. And in general with that other, "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,"

chap. vi. 12. To cease from duty, in part or in whole, upon the aversation of sin unto its spirituality, is to give sin the rule, and to obey it in the lust thereof. Yield not then unto it, but hold out the conflict; wait on God, and ye shall prevail: "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint," Isa. xl. 31. But that which is now so difficult, will increase in difficulty, if we give way unto it. But if we abide in our station, we shall prevail; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

[4.] Carry about a constant humbling sense of this close aversation unto spiritualness that yet lies in our nature. If men find the efficacy of it, what should, what consideration can, be more powerful, to bring them unto humble walking with God? That after all the discoveries that God hath made of himself unto them, all the kindness they have received from him; his doing them good, and not evil, in all things; there should be yet such a heart of unkindness and unbelief still abiding, as to have an aversation lying in it to communion with him: how ought the thoughts of it to cast us into the dust, to fill us with shame and self-abhorrence all our days! What have we found in God, in any of our approaches or addresses unto him, that it should be thus with us? What iniquity have we found in him? Hath he been a wilderness unto us, or a land of darkness? Did we ever lose any thing by drawing nigh unto him? Nay, hath not therein lain all the rest and peace which we have obtained? Is not he the fountain and spring of all our mercies, of all our desirable things? Hath he not bid us welcome at our coming? Have we not received from him more than heart can conceive, or tongue

express? What ails, then, our foolish and wretched hearts, to harbour such a cursed secret dislike of him and his ways? Let us be ashamed and astonished at the consideration of it, and walk in a humbling sense of it all our days. Let us carry this about with us in the most secret of our thoughts. And as this is a duty in itself acceptable unto God, who delights to dwell with them that are of a humble and contrite spirit, so it is of exceeding efficacy to the weakening of the evil we are treating of.

[5.] Labour to possess the mind with the beauty and excellency of spiritual things, that so they may be presented lovely and desirable unto the soul, and this cursed aversation of sin will be weakened thereby. It is an innate acknowledged principle, that the soul of man will not keep up cheerfully unto the worship of God, unless it have a discovery of beauty and comeliness in it. Hence, when men had lost all spiritual sense and savour of the things of God, to supply the want that was in their own souls they invented outwardly pompous and gorgeous ways of worship, in images, paintings, pictures, and I know not what carnal ornaments, which they have called the beauties of holiness. Thus much however was discovered therein, that the mind of man must see a beauty, a desirableness in the things of God's worship, or it will not delight in it, aversation will prevail. Let then the soul labour to acquaint itself with the spiritual beauty of obedience, of communion with God, and of all duties of immediate approach to him, that it may be filled with delight in them. It is not my present work to discover the heads and springs of that beauty and desirableness which is in spiritual duties; in their relation to God, the eternal spring of all beauty; to Christ, the love, desire, and hope of all nations; to

the Spirit, the great beautifier of souls, rendering them by his grace all-glorious within; in their suitableness to the souls of men as to their actings towards their last end; in the rectitude and holiness of the rule in attendance whereunto they are to be performed: but I only say at present in general, that to acquaint the soul thoroughly with these things, is an eminent way of weakening the aversation spoken of.

CHAPTER VI.

The work of this enmity against God by way of opposition. First, it lusteth. Wherein the lusting of sin consisteth. In surprising the soul; readiness to close with temptations; its fighting and warring, in rebellion against the law of grace, and in assaulting the soul.

How this enmity worketh by way of aversation hath been declared, as also the means that the soul is to use for the preventing of its effects and prevalency. The *second* way whereby it exerts itself is, opposition. Enmity will oppose and contend with that wherewith it is at enmity. It is so in things natural and moral. As light and darkness, heat and cold, so virtue and vice oppose each other. So it is with sin and grace: saith the apostle, "these are contrary the one to the other," Gal. v. 17: they are placed and set in mutual opposition, and that continually and constantly, as we shall see.

Now there are two ways whereby enemies manage an opposition; first, by force; and, secondly, by fraud and deceit. So when the egyptians became enemies to the children of Israel, and managed an enmity

against them, Pharaoh said, "Let us deal wisely with this people," Exod. i. 10; or rather, "cunningly and subtilly," for so Stephen, with respect to this word, expresseth it, Acts vii. 19, "he used all manner of fraudulent sophistry." And unto this deceit they added force, in their grievous oppressions. This is the way and manner of things where there is a prevailing enmity. And both these are made use of by the law of sin, in its enmity against God and our souls.

First; I shall begin with its actings as it were in a way of force, in an open, downright opposition to God and his law, or the good that a believing soul would do in obedience unto God and his law. And in this whole matter we must be careful to steer our course aright, taking the Scripture for our guide, with spiritual reason and experience for our companions. For there are many shelves in our course, which must be diligently avoided, that none who consider these things be troubled without cause, or comforted without a just foundation.

In this first way whereby this sin exerts its enmity in opposition, namely, as it were by force or strength, there are four things, expressing so many distinct degrees in its progress and procedure in the pursuit of its enmity. I. Its general inclination; it "lusteth," Gal. v. 17. II. Its particular way of contending; "it fights, or wars," Rom. vii. 23; James iv. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 11. III. Its success in this contest; it brings the soul into "captivity to the law of sin," Rom. vii. 23. IV. Its growth and rage upon success; it comes up to madness, as an enraged enemy will do, Eccl. ix. 3. All which we must speak to in order.

I. In general, it is said to lust. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17. This word ex-

presseth the general nature of that opposition which the law of sin maketh against God, and the rule of his Spirit or grace in them that believe. And therefore the least degree of that opposition is expressed hereby. When it doth any thing, it lusteth. As, because burning is the general acting of fire, whatever it doth else, it doth also burn. When fire doth any thing, it burns; and when the law of sin doth any thing, it lusts.

Hence, all the actings of this law of sin are called the lust of the flesh. "Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 16. "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14. Nor are these lusts of the flesh those only whereby men act their sensuality, in riot, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; but they comprehend all the actings of the law of sin whatsoever, in all the faculties and affections of the soul. Thus we have mention of the desires, or wills, or lusts of the mind, as well as of the flesh, Eph. ii. 3. The mind, the most spiritual part of the soul, hath its lusts, no less than the sensual appetite, which seems sometimes more properly to be called the flesh. And in the products of these lusts, there are defilements of the spirit, as well as of the flesh, 2 Cor. vii. 1; that is, of the mind and understanding, as well as of the appetite and affections, and the body that attends their service. And in the blamelessness of all these, consists our holiness. "The God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v. 23. Yea, by the flesh, in this matter, the whole old man, or the law of sin, is intended: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," John iii. 6; that is, it is all so, and nothing else. And whatever remains of

the old nature in the new man, is flesh still. And this flesh lusteth; this law of sin doth so; which is the general bottom and foundation of all its opposition unto God. And this it doth two ways.

1. In a hidden, close propensity unto all evil. This lies in it habitually. While a man is in the state of nature, fully under the power and dominion of this law of sin, it is said, that every figment of his heart is evil, and that continually, Gen. vi. 5. It can frame, fashion, produce, or act nothing but what is evil; because this habitual propensity unto evil that is in the law of sin, is absolutely predominant in such a one. It is in the heart like poison that hath nothing to allay its venomous qualities, and so infects whatever it touches. And where the power and dominion of it is broken, yet in its own nature it hath still an habitual propensity unto that which is evil, wherein its lusting doth consist.

But here we must distinguish between the habitual frame of the heart, and the natural propensity or habitual inclination of the law of sin in the heart. The habitual inclination of the heart is denominated from the principle that bears chief or sovereign rule in it; and therefore in believers it is unto good, unto God, unto holiness, unto obedience. The heart is not habitually inclined unto evil by the remainders of indwelling sin, but this sin in the heart hath a constant habitual propensity unto evil in itself or its own nature. This the apostle intends by its being present with us; "it is present with me," that is, always, and for its own end; which is to lust unto sin.

It is with indwelling sin as with a river; while the springs and fountains of it are open, and waters are continually supplied unto its streams, set a dam before it, and it causeth it to rise and swell, until it bear

down all, or overthrow the banks about it. Let these waters be abated, dried up, in some good measure, in the springs of them, and the remainder may be checked and restrained. But still, as long as there is any running water, it will constantly press upon what stands before it, according to its weight and strength, because it is its nature so to do. And if by any means it make a passage, it will proceed. So is it with indwelling sin; while the springs and fountains of it are open, in vain is it for men to set a dam before it, by their convictions, resolutions, vows, and promises. They may check it for a while; but it will increase, rise high, and rage, at one time or another, until it bears down all those convictions and resolutions, or makes itself an under-ground passage by some secret lust that shall give a full vent unto it. But now suppose that the springs of it are much dried up by regenerating grace, the streams or actings of it abated by holiness; yet whilst any thing remains of it, it will be pressing constantly to have vent, to press forward into actual sin. And this is its lusting.

And this habitual propensity in it is discovered two ways.

(1.) In its unexpected surprisals of the soul into foolish sinful figments and imaginations, which it looked not for, nor was any occasion administered unto them. It is with indwelling sin as it is with the contrary principle of sanctifying grace. This gives the soul, if I may so say, many a blessed surprisal. It often ingenerates and brings forth a holy, spiritual frame in the heart and mind, when we have had no previous rational considerations to work them thereunto; and this manifests it to be an habitual principle prevailing in the mind: so we read, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of

Amminadib," Cant. vi. 12; that is, free, willing, and ready for communion with Christ. I knew not; it was done by the power of the Spirit of grace, so that I took no notice of it, as it were, until it was done. The frequent actings of grace in this manner, exciting acts of faith, love, and complacency in God, are evidences of much strength and prevalency of it in the soul. And thus also it is with indwelling sin; ere the soul is aware, without any provocation or temptation, when it knows not, it is cast into a vain and foolish frame. Sin produceth its figments secretly to the heart, and prevents the mind's consideration of what it is about. I mean hereby those first acts of the soul, which are thus far involuntary as that they have not the actual consent of the will unto them, but are voluntary as far as sin hath its residence in the will. And these surprisals, if the soul be not awake to take speedy care for the prevention of their tendency, do oftentimes set all, as it were, on fire, and engage the mind and affections into actual sin: for, as by grace we are oftentimes, ere we are aware, made as the chariots of a willing people, and are far engaged in heavenly-mindedness and communion with Christ, making speed in it as in a chariot; so by sin are we oftentimes, ere we are aware, carried into distempered affections, foolish imaginations, and pleasing delightfulness, in things that are not good nor profitable. Hence is that caution of the apostle, if a man be surprised unawares with a fault, or in a transgression, Gal. vi. 1. I doubt not but the subtilty of Satan, and the power of temptation, are there taken into consideration by the apostle; which causeth him to express a man's falling into sin, by "if he be surprised:" so this working of indwelling sin also hath his consideration in it, and that in the chiefest place, without

which nothing else could surprise us. For without the help thereof, whatever comes from without, from Satan, or the world, must admit of some parley in the mind, before it be received; but it is from within, from ourselves, that we are surprised. Hereby we are disappointed and wrought over to do that which we would not, and hindered from the doing of that which we would.

Hence it is, that when the soul is oftentimes doing as it were quite another thing, engaged quite upon another design, sin starts that in the heart or imaginations of it, that carries it away into that which is evil and sinful. Yea, to manifest its power, sometimes when the soul is seriously engaged in the mortification of any sin, it will by one means or other lead it away into a dalliance with that very sin whose ruin it is seeking, and whose mortification it is engaged in. But as there is in this operation of the law of sin a special enticing or entangling, we shall speak unto it fully afterwards. Now these surprisals can be from nothing but an habitual propensity to evil in the principle from whence they proceed: not an habitual inclination unto actual sin in the mind or heart, but an habitual propensity unto evil in the sin that is in the mind or heart. This prevents the soul with its figments. How much communion with God is hereby prevented, how many meditations are disturbed, how much the minds and consciences of men have been defiled by this acting of sin, some may have observed. I know no greater burden in the life of a believer, than these involuntary surprisals of soul: involuntary, I say, as to the actual consent of the will, but not so in respect of that corruption which is in the will, and is the principle of them. And it is in respect unto these that the apostle utters his complaint, Rom. vii. 24.

(2.) This habitual inclination manifests itself in its readiness and promptness, without dispute or altercation, to join and close with every temptation whereby it may possibly be excited; as we know it is in the nature of fire to burn, because it immediately lays hold on whatever is combustible. Let any temptation whatever be proposed unto a man, the suitableness of whose matter unto his corruptions, or manner of its proposal, makes it a temptation, immediately he hath not only to do with the temptation, as outwardly proposed, but also with his own heart about it. Without further consideration or debate, the temptation hath got a friend in him. Not a moment's space is given between the proposal, and the necessity there is incumbent on the soul to look to its enemy within. And this also argues a constant habitual propensity unto evil. Our Saviour said of the assaults and temptations of Satan, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," John xiv. 30. He had more temptations intensively and extensively, in number, quality, and fierceness, from Satan and the world, than ever had any of the sons of men; but yet in all of them he had to deal only with that which came from without. His holy heart had nothing like them, nothing suited to them, or ready to give them entertainment; "the prince of this world had nothing in him." So it was with Adam; when a temptation befell him, he had only the outward proposal of it to look unto; all was well within, until the outward temptation took place and prevailed. With us it is not so.

In a city that is at unity in itself, compact and entire, without divisions and parties, if an enemy approach about it, the rulers and inhabitants have no thoughts at all but only how they may oppose the enemy with-

out, and resist him in his approaches. But if the city be divided in itself, if there be factions and traitors within, the very first thing they do is to look to the enemies at home, the traitors within; to cut off the head of Sheba, if they will be safe. All was well with Adam within doors when Satan came, so that he had nothing to do but to look to his assaults and approaches. But now on the access of any temptation, the soul is instantly to look in, where it shall find this traitor at work, closing with the baits of Satan, and stealing away the heart. And this it doth always, which evinceth an habitual inclination. David says, "I am ready to halt," or for halting, Psa. xxxviii. 17; I am prepared and disposed unto hallucination, to the slipping of my foot into sin, ver. 16, as he expounds the meaning of that phrase in another place, Psa. lxxiii. 2, 3. There was, from indwelling sin, a continual disposition in him to be slipping, stumbling, halting, on every occasion or temptation. There is nothing so vain, foolish, ridiculous, fond; nothing so vile and abominable, nothing so atheistical or execrable, but if it be proposed unto the soul in a way of temptation, there is that in this law of sin which is ready to answer it, before it be decried by grace. And this is the first thing in this lusting of the law of sin; it consists in its habitual propensity unto evil, manifesting itself by the involuntary surprisals of the soul unto sin, and its readiness, without dispute or consideration, to join with all temptations whatsoever.

2. Its lusting consists in its actual pressing after that which is evil, and actual opposition unto that which is good. The former instances showed its constant readiness to this work, this now treats of the work itself; it is not only ready, but for the most part always engaged. It lusteth, saith the Holy Ghost;

it doth so continually. It stirreth in the soul, by one act or other, constantly, almost as the spirits in the blood, or the blood in the veins. This the apostle calls its tempting; "every man is tempted of his own lust," James i. 14. Now what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to a man's consideration, which if he close withal, it is evil, it is sin unto him. This is sin's trade; "it lusteth." It is raising up in the heart, and proposing unto the mind and affections, that which is evil; trying as it were whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it may carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now when such a temptation comes from without, it is unto the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unless it be consented to. But the very proposal from within, it being the soul's own act, is its sin. And this is the work of the law of sin; it is restlessly and continually raising up and proposing innumerable various forms and appearances of evil, in this or that kind, indeed in every kind, that the nature of man is capable to exercise corruption in. Something or other, in matter, or manner, or circumstance, inordinate, unspiritual, unanswerable unto the rule, it hatcheth and proposeth unto the soul; and this power of sin to beget figments and ideas of actual evil in the heart, the apostle may have respect unto, 1 Thess. v. 22; "keep yourselves from every evil figment or idea of sin" in the heart; for the word there used doth not any where signify an outward form or appearance, neither is it the appearance of evil, but an evil idea or figment that is intended. And this lusting of sin is that which the prophet expresseth in wicked men, in whom the law of it is predominant, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isa. lvii. 20. A simi-

litude most lively, expressing the lustings of the law of sin, restlessly and continually bubbling up in the heart, with wicked, foolish, and filthy imaginations and desires. This then is the first thing in the opposition that this enmity makes to God, namely, its general inclination; it lusteth.

II. There is its particular way of contending; it fights or wars; that is, it acts with strength and violence, as men do in war. First, it lusts, stirring and moving inordinate figments in the mind, desires in the appetite and the affections, proposing them to the will. But it rests not there, it cannot rest; it urgeth, presseth, and pursueth its proposals, with earnestness, strength, and vigour; fighting, contending, and warring, to obtain its end and purpose. Would it merely stir up and propose things to the soul, and immediately acquiesce in the sentence and judgment of the mind, that the thing is evil, against God and his will, and not further to be insisted on; much sin might be prevented that is now produced. But it rests not here; it proceeds to carry on its design, and that with earnestness and contention. By this means wicked men inflame themselves, Isa. lvii. 5. They are self-inflamers unto sin, as the word signifies; every spark is cherished in them, until it grows into a flame; and so it will do in others, where it is so cherished.

Now this fighting, or warring of sin, consists in two things. 1. In its rebellion against grace, or the law of the mind. 2. In its assaulting the soul, contending for rule and sovereignty over it.

1. The first is thus expressed by the apostle; "I see," saith he, "another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind," Rom. vii. 23. There are, it seems, two laws in us; the law of the flesh, or of sin, and the law of the mind, or of grace. But

contrary laws cannot both obtain sovereign power over the same person, at the same time. The sovereign power in believers is in the hand of the law of grace; so the apostle declares, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," ver. 22. Obedience unto this law is performed with delight and complacency in the inward man, because its authority is lawful and good. So more expressly, "for sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," chap. vi. 14. Now to war against the law that hath a just sovereignty, is to rebel; and so the original word signifies; it is to rebel, and ought to have been so translated, "rebelling against the law of my mind." And this rebellion consists in a stubborn, obstinate opposition unto the commands and directions of the law of grace. Doth the law of the mind command any thing as duty? doth it severely rise up against any thing that is evil? When the lusting of the law of sin rises up to this degree, it contends against obedience with all its might; the effect whereof is, as the apostle tells us, the doing of that which we would not, and the not doing that which we would, ver. 15, 16. And we may gather a notable instance of the power of sin, in this its rebellion, from this place. The law of grace prevails upon the will, so that it would do that which is good. "To will is present with me," ver. 18; "when I would do good," ver. 21; and again, "and I would not do evil," ver. 19. And it prevails upon the understanding, so that it approves or disapproves, according to the dictates of the law of grace; "I consent unto the law that it is good," ver. 16. The judgment always lies on the side of grace. It prevails also on the affections; "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," ver. 22. Now if this be so, that grace hath

the sovereign power in the understanding, will, and affections, whence is it that it doth not always prevail, that we do not always do that which we would, and abstain from that which we would not? Is it not strange that a man should not do that which he chooseth, willeth, liketh, delighteth in? Is there any thing more required to enable us unto that which is good? The law of grace doth all as much as can be expected from it, that which in itself is abundantly sufficient for the perfecting of all holiness in the fear of the Lord. But here lies the difficulty, in the entangling opposition that is made by the rebellion of this law of sin. Neither is it expressible with what vigour and variety sin acts in this matter. Sometimes it proposeth diversions, sometimes it causeth weariness, sometimes it finds out difficulties, begets prejudices, and one way or other entangles the soul, so that it never suffers grace to have an absolute and complete success in any duty. "I find not the way perfectly to work out or accomplish that which is good," Rom. vii. 18; so the word signifies; and that from this opposition and resistance that is made by the law of sin. Now this rebellion appears in two things. (1.) In the opposition that it makes unto the general purpose and course of the soul. (2.) In the opposition that it makes unto particular duties.

(1.) In the opposition it makes to the general purpose and course of the soul. There is none in whom is the Spirit of Christ, none that is his, but it is his general design and purpose to walk in a universal conformity unto him in all things. Even from the inward frame of the heart to the whole compass of his outward actions, so it is with him. This God requires in his covenant, "walk before me, and be thou perfect," Gen. xvii. 1. Accordingly, his design is to

walk before God, and his frame is sincerity and uprightness therein. This is called "cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart," Acts xi. 23; that is, in all things, and that not with a slothful, dead, ineffectual purpose, but such as is operative, and sets the whole soul at work in pursuit of it. This the apostle sets forth, when he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 12—14. He useth three words, excellently expressing the soul's universal pursuit of this purpose of heart in cleaving unto God. First, saith he, "I follow after," prosecute; the word signifies properly to persecute, which, with what earnestness and diligence it is usually done, we know. Secondly, "I reach forward," reaching with great intenseness of spirit and affections. It is a great and constant endeavour, that is expressed in that word. Thirdly, "I press towards the mark;" that is, even as men that are running for a prize. All set forth the vigour, earnestness, diligence, and constancy, that are used in the pursuit of this purpose. And this the nature of the principle of grace requireth in them in whom it is. But yet we see with what failings, yea, fallings, their pursuit of this course is attended. The frame of the heart is changed, the heart is stolen away, the affections entangled, eruptions of unbelief and distempered passions discovered, carnal wisdom with all his attendants set on work; all contrary to the general principle and purpose of the soul. And

all this is from the rebellion of this law of sin, stirring up and provoking the heart unto disobedience. The prophet gives this character of hypocrites; "their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," Hos. x. 2. Now though this be wholly so, in respect of the mind and judgment, in hypocrites only, yet it is partially so in the best, in the sense described. They have a division, not of the heart, but in the heart; and thence it is that they are so often found faulty. So saith the apostle, "so that we cannot do the things that we would," Gal. v. 17: we cannot accomplish the design of close walking, according to the law of grace, because of the contrariety and rebellion of this law of sin.

(2.) It rebels also in respect to particular duties. It raiseth a combustion in the soul against the particular commands and designings of the law of grace; "you cannot do the things that you would;" that is, the duties which you judge incumbent on you, which you approve and delight in, in the inward man; you cannot do them as you would. Take an instance in prayer. A man addresseth himself to that duty; he would not only perform it, but he would perform it in that manner that the nature of the duty and his own condition do require. He would pray in the spirit, fervently, with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered, in faith, with love and delight, pouring forth his soul unto the Lord: this he aims at. Now oftentimes he shall find a rebellion, a fighting of the law of sin in this matter. He shall find it difficult to get any thing done, who thought to do all things. I do not say that it is thus always, but it is so when sin wars and rebels, which expresseth an especial acting of its power. Woeful entanglements do poor creatures oftentimes meet withal upon this account. Instead of that free enlarged communion with God that they aim at, the

best that their souls arrive unto, is but to go away mourning for their folly, deadness, and indisposition. In a word, there is no command of the law of grace, that is known, liked, and approved of by the soul, but when it comes to be observed, this law of sin, one way or other, makes head and rebels against it. And this is the first way of its fighting.

2. It doth not only rebel and resist, but it assaults the soul; it sets upon the law of the mind and grace; which is the second part of its warring. They "fight," or war "against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11; "they fight," or war "in your members," James iv. 1. Peter shows what they oppose and fight against, namely, the soul, and the law of grace therein; James, what they fight with, or by, namely, the members, or the corruption that is in our mortal bodies.* It takes the part of an assailant as well as of a resister. It makes attempts for rule and sovereignty, as well as opposeth the rule of grace. Now all war and fighting hath somewhat of violence in it, and there is therefore some violence in that acting of sin which the Scripture calls fighting and warring. And this assailing efficacy of sin, as distinguished from its rebelling, before treated of, consists in these things that ensue.

(1.) All its positive actings in stirring up unto sin, belong to this head. Oftentimes, by the vanity of the mind, or the sensuality of the affections, or the folly of the imaginations, it sets upon the soul then when the law of grace is not actually putting it on duty, so that therein it doth not rebel, but assault. Hence the apostle cries out, "who shall deliver me from it?"

* In this edition a few lines are here omitted, on account of the Greek words which they contain. Their import is, that the original word in Rom. vii. 23, signifies to rebel against a superior; the words in the passages just quoted, to assault or war for superiority.

Rom. vii. 24; who shall rescue me out of its hand, as the word signifies. When we pursue an enemy and he resists us, we do not cry out, "who shall deliver us," for we are the assailants; but, "who shall rescue me," is the cry of one who is set upon by an enemy. So it is here; a man is assaulted by his own lusts, as James speaks. By the way-side, in his employment, under a duty, sin sets upon the soul with vain imaginations, foolish desires, and would willingly employ the soul to make provision for its satisfaction, which the apostle cautions us against; "do not accomplish the providence, or projection of the flesh, for its own satisfaction," Rom. xiii. 14.

(2.) Its importunity and urgency seem to be noted in this expression of its warring. Enemies in war are restless, pressing, and importunate. So is the law of sin. Doth it set upon the soul? cast off its motions, it returns again. Rebuke them by the power of grace; they withdraw for a while and return again. Set before them the cross of Christ, they do as those that came to take him; at the sight of him they went backwards, and fell unto the ground, but they arose again and laid hands on him. Sin gives place for a season, but returns, and presseth on the soul again. Mind it of the love of God in Christ, though it be stricken, yet it gives not over. Present hell-fire unto it, it rusheth into the midst of those flames. Reproach it with its folly and madness, it knows no shame, but presseth on still. Let the thoughts of the mind strive to fly from it, it follows as on the wings of the wind. And by this importunity it wearies and wears out the soul; and if the great remedy, Rom. viii. 13, come not timely, it prevails to a conquest. There is nothing more marvellous nor dreadful in the working of sin, than this its importunity. The soul knows not

what to make of it; it dislikes, abhors, abominates the evil it tends unto; it despiseth the thoughts of it, hates them as hell, and yet is by itself imposed on with them, as if it were another person, an express enemy got within him. All this the apostle discovers, "the things that I do I hate," Rom. vii. 15, 17. It is not of outward actions, but the inward risings of the mind, that he treats. I hate them, says he, I abominate them. But why then will he have any thing more to do with them? If he hate them, and abhor himself for them, let them alone, have no more to do with them, and so end the matter. Alas, saith he, "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," ver. 17. I have one within me that is my enemy, that with endless, restless importunity, puts these things upon me, even the things that I hate and abominate; I cannot be rid of them, I am weary of myself, I cannot fly from them; "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" I do not say that this is the ordinary condition of believers, but thus it is often when this law of sin riseth up to war and fighting. It is not thus with them in respect of particular sins, this or that sin, outward sins, sins of life or conversation; but yet, in respect of vanity of mind, inward and spiritual distempers, it is often so. Some, I know, pretend to great perfection; but I am resolved to believe the apostle before them all and every one.

(3.) It carries on its war, by entangling the affections, and drawing them into a combination against the mind. Let grace be enthroned in the mind and judgment, yet if the law of sin lays hold upon and entangles the affections, or any of them, it hath gotten a fort, from whence it continually assaults the soul. Hence the great duty of mortification is chiefly directed to take place upon the affections; "mortify there-

fore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry," Col. iii. 5. The members that are upon the earth, are our affections. For in the outward part of the body, sin is not seated; in particular, not covetousness, which is there enumerated to be mortified amongst our members that are on the earth. Yea, after grace hath taken possession of the soul, the affections do become the principal seat of the remainders of sin. And therefore Paul saith, that this law is in our members, Rom. vii. 23; and James, that it wars in our members, chap. iv. 1; that is, our affections. And there is no estimate to be taken of the work of mortification aright, but by the affections. We may every day see persons of very eminent light, that yet visibly have unmortified hearts and conversations. Their affections have not been crucified with Christ. Now then, when this law of sin can possess any affection, whatever it be, love, delight, fear, it will make from it, and by it, fearful assaults upon the soul. For instance, hath it got the love of any one entangled with the world, or the things of it, "the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life?" how will it take advantage, on every occasion, to break in upon the soul! It shall do nothing, attempt nothing, be in no place or company, perform no duty private or public, but sin will have one blow or other at it; it will be one way or other soliciting for itself.

This is the sum of what we shall offer unto this acting of the law of sin in a way of fighting and warring against our souls, which is so often mentioned in the Scripture. And a due consideration of it is of no small advantage unto us, especially to bring us unto self-abasement, to teach us to walk humbly and mournfully before God. There are two things that are

suited to humble the souls of men. And they are, first, a due consideration of God, and then of themselves. Of God, in his greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority; of ourselves, in our mean, abject, and sinful condition. Now of all things in our condition, there is nothing so suited unto this end and purpose as that which lies before us, namely, the vile remainders of enmity against God which are yet in our hearts and natures. And it is no small evidence of a gracious soul, when it is willing to search itself in this matter, and to be helped therein from a word of truth; when it is willing that the word should dive into the secret parts of the heart, and rip open whatever of evil and corruption lies therein. The prophet says of Ephraim, "he loveth to tread out the corn," Hos. x. 11; he loved to work when he might eat, to have always the corn before him; but God says he would cause him to plough, a labour no less needful, though at present not so delightful. Most men love to hear of the doctrine of grace, of the pardon of sin, of free love, and suppose they find food therein; however, it is evident that they grow and thrive in the life and notion of them. But to be breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts, to be inquiring after the weeds and briers that grow in them, they delight not so much, though this be no less necessary than the other. This path is not so beaten as that of grace, nor so trod in, though it be the only way to come to a true knowledge of grace itself. It may be, some who are wise and grown in other truths, may yet be so little skilled in searching their own hearts that they may be slow in the perception and understanding of these things. But this sloth and neglect is to be shaken off, if we have any regard unto our souls. It is more than probable that many a false hypocrite, who have deceived themselves

as well as others, because they thought the doctrine of the gospel pleased them, and therefore supposed they believed it, might be delivered from their soul-ruining deceits, if they would diligently apply themselves unto this search of their own hearts. Or would other professors walk with so much boldness and security as some do, if they considered aright what a deadly watchful enemy they continually carry about, with them and in them? Would they so much indulge, as they do, carnal joys and pleasures, or pursue their perishing affairs with so much delight and greediness as they do? It were to be wished that we would all apply our hearts more to this work, even to come to a true understanding of the nature, power, and subtlety of this our adversary; that our souls may be humbled, and that,

[1.] In walking with God. His delight is with the humble and contrite ones, those that tremble at his word, the mourners in Zion; and such are we only when we have a due sense of our own vile condition. This will beget reverence of God, sense of our distance from him, admiration of his grace and condescension, a due valuation of mercy, far above those light, verbal, airy attainments that some have boasted of.

[2.] In walking with others. It lays in provision to prevent those great evils of judging, spiritual unmercifulness, harsh censuring, which I have observed to have been pretended by many, who, at the same time, as afterwards hath appeared, have been guilty of greater or worse crimes than those which they have raved against in others. This, I say, will lead us to meekness, compassion, readiness to forgive, to pass by offences, even when we shall consider what is our state, as the apostle plainly declares, Gal. vi. 1. The man that understands the evil of his own heart, how vile

it is, is the only useful, fruitful, and solidly believing and obedient person. Others are fit only to delude themselves, to disquiet families, churches, and all relations whatever. Let us then consider our hearts wisely, and then go and see if we can be proud of our gifts, our graces, our valuation and esteem among professors, our enjoyments. Let us go then and judge, condemn, reproach others that have been tempted, we shall find a great inconsistency in these things. And many things of the like nature might be here added, upon the consideration of this woeful effect of indwelling sin. The way of opposing and defeating its design herein shall be afterwards considered.

CHAPTER VII.

The captivating power of indwelling sin, wherein it consisteth. The prevalency of sin, when from itself, when from temptation. The rage and madness that is in sin.

III. The third thing assigned unto this law of sin in its opposition to God and the law of his grace, is, that it leads the soul captive; "I find a law leading me captive," captivating me, "unto the law of sin," Rom. vii. 23. And this is the utmost height unto which the apostle in that place carries the opposition and warring of the remainders of indwelling sin, closing the consideration of it with a complaint of the state and condition of believers thereby, and an earnest prayer for deliverance from it; "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What is contained in this expression, and intended by it, shall be declared in the ensuing observations.

1. It is not directly the power and actings of the

law of sin that are here expressed, but its success in and upon its actings. But success is the greatest evidence of power; and leading captive in war, is the height of success. None can aim at greater success than to lead their enemies captive. And it is a peculiar expression, in the Scripture, of great success. So the Lord Christ, on his victory over Satan, is said to have "led captivity captive," Eph. iv. 8; that is, to conquer him, who had conquered and prevailed over others. And this he did, when by death he "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14. Here, then, a great prevalency and power of sin, in its warring against the soul, is discovered. It so wars, as to lead captive, which, had it not had greater power, it could not do, especially against that resistance of the soul, which is included in this expression.

2. It is said, that it leads the soul captive unto the law of sin. Not to this or that sin, particular sin, actual sin, but to the law of sin. God, for the most part, ordereth things so, and gives out such supplies of grace unto believers, as that they shall not be made a prey unto this or that particular sin, that it should prevail in them and compel them to serve it in the lusts thereof, that it should have dominion over them, that they should be captives and slaves unto it. This is that which David prays so earnestly against: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright," Psa. xix. 12, 13. He supposeth the continuance of the law of sin in him, which will bring forth errors of life and secret sins, against which he findeth relief in pardoning and cleansing mercy, which he prays for. This, saith he, will be my condition. But for sins of

pride and boldness, such as all sins are that get dominion in a man, that make a captive of a man, "the Lord restrain thy servant from them." For what sin soever gets such power in a man, be it in its own nature small or great, it becomes, in him in whom it is a sin of boldness, pride, and presumption. For these things are not reckoned from the nature or kind of the sin, but from its prevalency and customariness, wherein its pride, boldness, and contempt of God doth consist. To the same purpose, if I mistake not, prays Jabez, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!" 1 Chron. iv. 10. The holy man took occasion from his own name to pray against sin, that that might not be a grief and sorrow to him by its power and prevalency. I confess, sometimes it may come to this with a believer, that for a season he may be led captive by some particular sin. It may have so much prevalency in him, as to have power over him. So it seems to have been with David when he lay so long in his sin without repentance; and was plainly so with those of whom God speaks in the prophet, "for the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him," Isa. lvii. 17, 18. They continued under the power of their covetousness, so that no dealings of God with them, for so long a time, could reclaim them. But, for the most part, when any lust or sin doth so prevail, it is from the advantage and furtherance that it hath got by some powerful temptation of Satan. He hath poisoned it, inflamed it, and entangled the soul. So the apostle, speaking of such as through sin were fallen off from

their holiness, says, "they were in the snare of the devil, being taken captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. Though it were their own lusts that they served, yet they were brought into bondage thereunto by being entangled in some snare of Satan; and thence they are said to be taken alive, as a poor beast in a toil.

And here, by the way, we may a little inquire whether the prevailing power of a particular sin in any, be from itself, or from the influence of temptation upon it; concerning which, at present, take only these two observations. First, much of the prevalency of sin upon the soul is certainly from Satan, when the perplexing and captivating sin hath no peculiar footing, nor advantage in the nature, constitution, or condition of the sinner. When any lust grows high and prevailing, more than others, upon its own account, it is from the peculiar advantage that it hath in the natural constitution, or the station or condition of the person in the world. For otherwise the law of sin gives an equal propensity unto all evil, an equal vigour unto every lust. When, therefore, it cannot be discerned that the captivating sin is peculiarly fixed in the nature of the sinner, or is advantaged from his education or employment in the world, the prevalency of it is peculiarly from Satan. He hath got to the root of it, and hath given it poison and strength. Yea, perhaps sometimes that which may seem to the soul to be the corrupt lusting of the heart, is nothing but Satan's imposing his suggestions on the imagination. If then a man find an importunate rage from any corruption that is not evidently seated in his nature, let him, as the papists say, cross himself, or fly by faith to the cross of Christ, for the devil is nigh at hand. Second, when a lust is prevalent unto captivity, where it brings in no advantage to the flesh, it is from Satan.

All that the law of sin doth of itself, is to serve the providence of the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14; and it must bring in unto it somewhat of the profits and pleasures that are its object. Now if the prevailing sin do not so act itself; if it be more spiritual and inward; it is much from Satan, by the imagination, more than the corruption of the heart itself. But this by the way.

I say then, that the apostle treats not here of our being captivated unto this or that sin, but unto the law of sin. That is, we are compelled to bear its presence and burden, whether we will or no. Sometimes the soul thinks or hopes that it may, through grace, be utterly freed from this troublesome inmate. Upon some sweet enjoyment of God, some full supply of grace, some return from wandering, some deep affliction, some thorough humiliation, the poor soul begins to hope that it shall now be freed from the law of sin. But after a while, it perceives that it is quite otherwise. Sin acts again, makes good its old station, and the soul finds that, whether it will or no, it must bear its yoke. This makes it sigh and cry out for deliverance.

3. This leading captive, argues a prevalency against the resistance or contrary actings of the will. This is intimated plainly in this expression, namely, that the will opposeth and makes head, as it were, against the working of sin. This the apostle declares in those expressions which he uses in verses 15, 19, and 20. And herein consists the lusting of the Spirit against the flesh, Gal. v. 17; that is, the contending of grace to expel and subdue it. The spiritual habits of grace that are in the will, do so resist and act against it; and the excitation of those habits by the Spirit is directed to the same purpose. This leading captive is contrary, I say, to the inclinations and actings of the

renewed will. No man is made a captive but against his will. Captivity is misery and trouble, and no man willingly puts himself into trouble. Men choose it in its causes, and in the ways and means leading to it, but not in itself. So the prophet informs us; Ephraim was not willingly oppressed and broken in judgment, Hos. v. 11. That was his misery and trouble; but he willingly walked after the commandment of the idolatrous kings which brought him thereunto. Whatever consent, then, the soul may give unto sin, which is the means of this captivity, it gives none to the captivity itself: that is against the will wholly. Hence these things ensue.

(1.) That the power of sin is great, which is that we are in demonstration of; and this appears in its prevalency unto captivity, against the actings and contendings of the will for liberty from it. Had it no opposition made unto it, or were its adversary weak, negligent, slothful, it were no great evidence of its power that it made captives. But its prevailing against diligence, activity, watchfulness, the constant resistance of the will, this evinceth its efficacy.

(2.) This leading captive intimates manifold particular successes. Had it not success in particular, it could not be said at all to lead captive. Rebel it might, assail it might, but it cannot be said to lead captive without some successes. And there are several degrees of the success of the law of sin in the soul. Sometimes it carries the person into outward actual sin, which is its utmost aim. Sometimes it obtaineth the consent of the will, but is cast out by grace, and proceeds no farther. Sometimes it wearies and entangles the soul, so that it turns aside, as it were, and leaves contending, which is a success also. One, or more, or all of these must be, where captivity takes place.

Such a kind of course doth the apostle ascribe unto covetousness, 1 Tim. vi. 9.

(3.) This leading captive manifests this condition to be miserable and wretched. To be thus yoked and dealt withal against the judgment of the mind, the choice and consent of the will, its utmost strivings and contendings, how sad is it! When the neck is sore and tender with former pressures, to be compelled to bear the yoke again; this pierces, this grieves, this even breaks the heart. When the soul is principled by grace unto a loathing of sin, of every evil way, to a hatred of the least discrepancy between itself and the holy will of God, then to be imposed on by this law of sin, with all that enmity and folly, that deadness and filth, wherewith it is attended; what more dreadful condition! All captivity is dreadful in its own nature; the greatest aggravation of it is from the condition of the tyrant unto whom any is captivated. Now what can be worse than this law of sin? Hence the apostle, having once mentioned this captivity, cries out as one quite weary and ready to faint, Rom. vii. 24.

(4.) This condition is peculiar to believers. Unregenerate men are not said to be led captive to the law of sin. They may, indeed, be led captive unto this or that particular sin or corruption; that is, they may be forced to serve it against the power of their convictions. They are convinced of the evil of it; an adulterer of his uncleanness, a drunkard of his abomination; and make some resolutions, it may be, against it; but their lust is too hard for them, they cannot cease to sin, and so are made captives or slaves to this or that particular sin. But they cannot be said to be led captive to the law of sin, and that because they are willingly subject thereunto. It hath, as it were, a

rightful dominion over them, and they oppose it not, but only when it hath irruptions to the disturbance of their consciences. And then the opposition they make unto it is not from their wills, but is the mere acting of an affrighted conscience and a convinced mind. They regard not the nature of sin, but its guilt and consequences. But to be brought into captivity, is that which befalls a man against his will. Which is all that shall be spoken concerning this degree of the actings of the power of sin, manifesting itself in its success.

IV. The fourth and last degree of the opposition made by the law of sin, to God and the law of his will and grace, is in its rage and madness. There is madness in its nature; "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart," Eccl. ix. 3. The evil that the heart of man is full of by nature, is that indwelling sin whereof we speak. And this is so in their heart, that it riseth up unto madness. The Holy Ghost expresseth this rage of sin by a fit similitude, which he useth in sundry places, Jer. ii. 24. It maketh men as a wild ass; she traverseth her ways, and snuffeth up the wind, and runneth whither her mind or lust leads her. And he saith of idolaters, enraged with their lust, that they "are mad upon their idols," Jer. l. 38; Hos. viii. We may a little consider what lies in this madness and rage of sin, and how it riseth up thereunto.

1. For the nature of it, it seems to consist in a violent, heady, pertinacious pressing unto evil or sin. Violence, importunity, and pertinacity are in it. It is the tearing and torturing of the soul by any sin, to force its consent, and to obtain satisfaction. It riseth up in the heart, is denied by the law of grace, and rebuked; it returns and exerts its poison again; the soul is

startled, casts it off; it returns again with new violence and importunity; the soul cries out for help and deliverance, looks round about to all springs of gospel grace and relief, trembles at the furious assaults of sin, and casts itself into the arms of Christ for deliverance. And if it be not able to take that course, it is foiled, and hurried up and down through the mire and filth of foolish imaginations, corrupt and noisome lusts, which rend and tear it, as if they would devour its whole spiritual life and power; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10; 2 Pet. ii. 14. It was not much otherwise with them whom we instanced before, Isa. lvii. 17: they had an inflamed, enraged lust working in them, even covetousness, or the love of this world, by which, as the apostle speaks, men "pierce themselves through with many sorrows." God is angry with them, and discovereth his wrath by all the ways and means that it was possible for them to be made sensible thereof. He was wroth and smote them; but though, it may be, this staggered them a little, yet they went on. He is angry, and hides himself from them; deserts them as to his gracious, assisting, comforting presence. Doth this work the effect? No, they go on frowardly still, as men mad on their covetousness. Nothing can put a stop to their raging lusts. This is plain madness and fury. We need not seek far for instances; we see men mad on their lusts every day; and, which is the worst kind of madness, their lusts do not rage so much in them, as they rage in the pursuit of them. Are those greedy pursuits of things in the world, which we see some men engaged in, though they have other pretences, any thing else indeed but plain madness in the pursuit of their lusts? God, who searcheth the hearts of men, knows that the most of things that are done with other pretences in the world, are nothing

but the actings of men, mad and furious in the pursuit of their lusts.

2. That sin ariseth not unto this height ordinarily, but when it hath got a double advantage.

(1.) That it be provoked, enraged, and heightened by some great temptation. Though it be a poison in itself, yet, being inbred in nature, it grows not violently outrageous without the contribution of some new poison of Satan unto it in a suitable temptation. It was the advantage that Satan got against David, by a suitable temptation, that raised his lusts to that rage and madness which they went forth unto in the business of Bathsheba and Uriah. Though sin be always a fire in the bones, yet it flames not, unless Satan come with his bellows and blow it up. And let any one in whom the law of sin ariseth to this height of rage, seriously consider, and he may find out where the devil stands and puts in, in this business.

(2.) It must be advantaged by some former entertainment and prevalency. Sin grows not to this height at its first assault. Had it not been suffered to make its entrance, had there not been some yielding in the soul, this had not come about. The great wisdom and security of the soul in dealing with indwelling sin, is to put a violent stop to its beginnings, its first motions and actings. Venture all on the first attempt. Die rather than yield one step unto it. If through the deceit of sin, or the negligence of the soul, or its carnal confidence to give bounds to the actings of lust at other seasons, it makes any entrance into the soul, and finds any entertainment, it gets strength and power, and insensibly ariseth to the frame under consideration. Thou hadst never had the experience of the fury of sin, if thou hadst not been content with some of its dalliances. Hadst thou not brought up this servant,

this slave, delicately, it would not have now presumec beyond a son. Now when the law of sin in any par ticular hath got this double advantage, the furtheranc of a vigorous temptation and some prevalency former ly obtained, whereby it is let into the strengths of th soul, it often riseth up to this frame whereof we speak

3. We may see what accompanies this rage an madness, what are the properties of it, what effects i produceth.

(1.) There is in it the casting off, for a time a least, of the yoke, rule, and government, of the spiri and law of grace. Where grace hath the dominion it will never utterly be expelled from its throne; it wi still keep its right and sovereignty. But its influence may for a season be intercepted, and its governmen be suspended, by the power of sin. Can we thin that the law of grace had any actual influence of rul on the heart of David when, upon the provocation re ceived from Nabal, he was so hurried with the desi of self-revenge that he cried to his companions, "Gir ye on every man his sword," and resolved not to leav alive one man of his whole household? 1 Sam. xx 13. Or that Asa was in any better frame when h smote the prophet, and put him in prison, that spak unto him in the name of the Lord? 2 Chron. xvi. 1 Sin, in this case, is like an untamed horse whic having first cast off his rider, runs away with fierc ness and rage. It first casts off a present sense of th yoke of Christ and the law of his grace, and the hurries the soul at its pleasure. Let us a little co sider how this is done.

The seat and residence of grace is in the whole sou it is in the inner man, it is in the mind, the will, an the affections; for the whole soul is renewed by it un the image of God, Eph. iv. 23, 24. And the who

man is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. And in all these doth it exert its power and efficacy. Its rule and dominion is the pursuit of its effectual working in all the faculties of the soul, as they are one united principle of moral and spiritual operations. So then, the interrupting of its exercise, of its rule and power, by the law of sin, must consist in its contrary acting in and upon the faculties and affections of the soul, whereon, and by which, grace should exert its power and efficacy: and this it doth. It darkens the mind, partly through innumerable vain prejudices and false reasonings, as we shall see when we come to consider its deceitfulness; and partly through the steaming of the affections, heated with the noisome lusts that have laid hold on them. Hence that saving light that is in the mind, is clouded and stifled, that it cannot put forth its transforming power to change the soul into the likeness of Christ discovered to it, which is its proper work, Rom. xii. 2. The habitual inclination of the will to obedience, which is the next way of the working of the law of grace, is first weakened, then cast aside and rendered useless, by the continual solicitations of sin and temptation; so that the will first lets go its hold, and disputes whether it shall yield or no, and at last gives up itself to its adversary. And, as for the affections, commonly the beginning of this evil is in them. They cross one another, and torture the soul with their impetuous violence. By this way is the rule of the law of grace intercepted by the law of sin, even by imposing upon it in the whole seat of its government. When this is done, it is sad work that sin will make in the soul. The apostle warns believers to take heed hereof; "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof," Rom. vi. 12. Look to it that it

get not the dominion; that it usurp not rule, no, not for a moment. It will labour to intrude itself into the throne; watch against it, or a woeful state and condition lies at the door. This, then, accompanies this rage and madness of the law of sin. It casts off, during its prevalency, the rule of the law of grace wholly. Grace speaks in the soul, but is not heard; it commands the contrary, but is not obeyed. It cries out, "Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hateth," but is not regarded; that is, not so far as to be able to put a present stop to the rage of sin, and to recover its own rule, which God, in his own time, restores to it by the power of his Spirit dwelling in us.

(2.) Madness, or rage, is accompanied with fearlessness and contempt of danger. It takes away the power of consideration, and all that influence it ought to have upon the soul. Hence sinners that are wholly under the power of this rage, are said to run upon God, and the thick bosses of his buckler, that wherein he is armed for their utter ruin, Job xv. 21. They despise the utmost that he can do to them, being secretly resolved to accomplish their lusts, though it cost them their souls. Some few considerations will further clear this unto us.

[1.] Oftentimes, when the soul is broken loose from the power of renewing grace, God deals with it, to keep it within bounds, by preventing grace. So the Lord declares that he will deal with Israel; "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them," Hos. ii. 6, 7. Seeing thou hast rejected me, I will take another course with thee; I will lay obstacles before thee, that thou shalt not be able to pass on whither the fury of thy lusts

would drive thee. He will oppose that to them from without which shall obstruct them in their progress.

[2.] These hinderances that God lays in the way of sinners, as shall be afterwards at large declared, are of two sorts.

The first of these are, rational considerations, taken from the consequences of the sin and evil that the soul is solicited unto, and perplexed withal. Such are the fear of death, judgment, and hell, of falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire. Whilst a man is under the power of the law of the Spirit of life, the love of Christ constraineth him, 2 Cor. v. 14. The principle of his doing good and abstaining from evil, is faith working by love, accompanied with a following of Christ because of the sweet savour of his name. But now, when this blessed easy yoke is for a season cast off, so as was manifested before, God sets a hedge of terror before the soul, minds it of death and judgment to come, flashes the flames of hell-fire in the face, fills the soul with considerations of all the evil consequence of sin, to deter it from its purpose. To this end doth he make use of all the threatenings recorded in the law and the gospel. To this head also may be referred all the considerations that may be taken from things temporal, as shame, reproach, scandal, punishments, and the like. By the consideration of these things, I say, doth God set a hedge before them.

The second are, providential dispensations, used by the Lord to the same purpose; and these are of two sorts.

Such as are suited to work upon the soul, and to cause it to desist and give over in its lustings and pursuit of sin. Such are afflictions and mercies. "I was wroth, and I smote them," Isa. lvii. 17. I testified

my dislike of their ways by afflictions, Hos. ii. 9, 11, 12. God chastens men with pains on their bodies, saith he, in Job, to turn them from their purpose, and to hide sin from them, chap. xxxiii. 19. And other ways he hath to come to them and touch them, as in their names, relations, estates, and desirable things. Or else he heaps mercies on them, that they may consider whom they are rebelling against: it may be, signal distinguished mercies are made their portion for many days.

Again, such as actually hinder the soul from pursuing sin, though it be resolved so to do. The various ways whereby God doth this, we must afterwards consider.

These are the ways, I say, whereby the soul is dealt with, after the law of indwelling sin hath cast off for a season the influencing power of the law of grace. But now, when lust rises up to rage and madness, it will also contemn all these, even the rod and Him that hath appointed it. It will rush on shame, reproaches, wrath, and whatever may befall it: that is, though they be presented unto it, it will venture upon them all. Rage and madness are fearless. And this it doth two ways.

[1.] It possesseth the mind, so that it suffers not the consideration of these things to dwell upon it, but renders the thoughts of them slight and evanescent. Or if the mind do force itself to a contemplation of them, yet lust interposeth between it and the affections, so that they shall not be influenced by it in any proportion to what is required. The soul, in such a condition, will be able to take such things into contemplation, and not at all to be moved by them. And where they do prevail for a season, yet they are insensibly wrought off from the heart again.

[2.] By secret stubborn resolves to venture all upon the way wherein it is.

And this is the second branch of this evidence of the power of sin, taken from the opposition that it makes to the law of grace, as it were by the way of force, strength, and violence. The consideration of its deceit doth now follow.

CHAPTER VIII.

Indwelling sin proved powerful from its deceit. Proved to be deceitful. The general nature of deceit; James i. 14, *opened. How the mind is drawn off from its duty by the deceitfulness of sin. The principal duties of the mind in our obedience. The ways and means whereby it is turned from it.*

THE second part of the evidence of the power of sin, from its manner of operation, is taken from its deceitfulness. It adds, in its working, deceit unto power. The efficacy of that must needs be great, and is carefully to be watched against by all such as value their souls, where power and deceit are combined; especially advantaged and assisted by all the ways and means before insisted on.

Before we come to show wherein the nature of this deceitfulness of sin doth consist, and how it prevaileth thereby, some testimonies to the thing itself shall be briefly given, and some light as to the general nature of it.

That sin, indwelling sin, is deceitful, we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost; Take heed that ye be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. iii. 13. Deceitful it is; take heed of it; watch against

it; or it will produce its utmost effect, in hardening the heart against God. It is on the account of sin that the heart is said to be "deceitful above all things," Jer. xvii. 9. Take a man in other things, and, as Job speaks, though he would be wise and crafty, he is like the wild ass's colt, chap. xi. 12; a poor, vain, empty nothing. But consider his heart on the account of this law of sin, it is crafty and deceitful above all things. "They are wise to do evil," saith the prophet, "but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. iv. 22. To the same purpose speaks the apostle; "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," Eph. iv. 22. Every lust, which is a branch of this law of sin, is deceitful; and where there is poison in every stream, the fountain must needs be corrupt. No particular lust hath any deceit in it, but what is communicated unto it from this fountain of all actual lust, this law of sin. And the coming of the man of sin is said to be in and with the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," 2 Thess. ii. 10. Unrighteousness is a thing generally decried and evil-spoken of amongst men, so that it is not easy to conceive how any man should avail himself of a reputation thereby. But there is a deceivableness in it, whereby the minds of men are turned aside from a due consideration of it, as we shall manifest afterwards. And thus the account which the apostle gives, concerning those who are under the power of sin, is, that they are "deceived," Tit. iii. 3. And the life of evil men is nothing but "deceiving and being deceived," 2 Tim. iii. 13. So that we have sufficient testimony given to this qualification of the enemy with whom we have to deal, that he is deceitful; which consideration, of all things, puts the mind of man to a loss in dealing with an adversary. He knows he can have no security against one

that is deceitful, but in standing upon his own guard and defence all his days.

Further to manifest the strength and advantage that sin hath by its deceit, we may observe that the Scripture places it for the most part as the head and spring of every sin, even as if there were no sin followed after but where deceit went before. So the reason the apostle gives why Adam, though he was first formed, was not first in the transgression, is, because he was not first deceived, 1 Tim. ii. 12—14. The woman, though made last, yet being first deceived, was first in the sin. Even that first sin began in deceit, and until the mind was deceived the soul was safe. Eve, therefore, did truly express the matter, though she did it not to a good end; "The serpent beguiled me," said she, "and I did eat," Gen. iii. 13. She thought to extenuate her own crime by charging the serpent. And this was a new fruit of the sin she had cast herself into. But the matter of fact was true; she was beguiled before she ate; deceit went before the transgression. And the apostle shows that sin and Satan still take the same course; "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 3. There is, saith he, the same way of working towards actual sin as was of old; beguiling, deceiving goes before; and sin, that is the actual accomplishment of it, followeth after. Hence all the great works that the devil doth in the world, to stir men up to an opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, he doth them by deceit. "The devil, who deceiveth the whole world," Rev. xii. 9. It were utterly impossible men should be prevailed on to abide in his service, acting his designs to their eternal and sometimes their temporal ruin, were

they not exceedingly deceived: see also cha
xx. 10.

Hence are those manifold cautions that are given u
to take heed that we be not deceived if we would tak
heed that we do not sin: see Eph. v. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 9
xv. 33; Gal. vi. 7; Luke xxi. 8. From all whic
we may learn the influence that deceit hath unto si
and consequently the advantage that the law of si
hath to put forth its power by its deceitfulness. Whe
it prevails to deceive, it fails not to bring forth its frui

The ground of this efficacy of sin by deceit, is take
from the faculty of the soul affected with it. Dece
properly affects the mind; it is the mind that is de
ceived. When sin attempts any other way of entran
into the soul, as by the affections, the mind, retainin
its right and sovereignty, is able to give check an
control unto it. But where the mind is tainted, th
prevalency must be great; for the mind, or unde
standing, is the leading faculty of the soul; and wh
that fixes on, the will and affections rush after, bein
capable of no consideration but what that presen
unto them. Hence it is, that though the entangleme
of the affections unto sin be oftentimes most troubl
some, yet the deceit of the mind is always most da
gerous, and that because of the place it possesseth
the soul in respect to all its operations. Its office
to guide, direct, choose, and lead; and if the light th
is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

And this will further appear, if we consider the n
ture of deceit in general. It consists in representi
unto the soul or mind things otherwise than they a
either in their nature, causes, effects, or present resp
unto the soul. This is the general nature of dece
and it prevails many ways. It hides what ought
be seen and considered; conceals circumstances a

consequences; presents what is not, or things as they are not, as we shall afterwards manifest in particular. It was shown before that Satan "beguiled" and "deceived" our first parents; that term the Holy Ghost gives unto his temptation and seduction. And how he did deceive them the Scripture relates, Gen. iii. 4, 5. He did it by representing things otherwise than they were. The fruit was desirable; that was apparent unto the eye. Hence Satan takes advantage secretly to insinuate, that it was merely an abridgement of their happiness that God aimed at, in forbidding them to eat of it. That it was for a trial of their obedience, that certain though not immediate ruin would ensue upon the eating of it, he hides from them; only he proposeth the present advantage of knowledge; and so presents the whole case quite otherwise unto them than indeed it was. This is the nature of deceit; it is a representation of a matter under disguises, hiding that which is undesirable, proposing that which indeed is not in it, so as that the mind may make a false judgment of it. So Jacob deceived Isaac by his brother's raiment and the skins on his hands and neck.

Again, deceit hath advantage by that way of management which is inseparable from it. It is always carried on by degrees, by little and little, that the whole of the design and aim in hand be not at once discovered. So dealt Satan in that great deceit before mentioned; he proceeded in it by steps and degrees. First, he takes off an objection, and tells them they shall not die; then proposeth the good of knowledge to them, and their being like to God thereby. To hide and conceal ends, to proceed by steps and degrees, to make use of what is obtained, and thence to press on to further effects, is the true nature of deceit. Stephen tells the Jews, that the king of Egypt dealt

"subtilly" or "deceitfully" with their kindred, Acts vii. 19. How he did it we may see, Exod. i. He did not at first fall to killing and slaying them, but says, "Come, let us deal wisely," ver. 10; beginning to oppress them. This brings forth their bondage, ver. 11. Having got this ground to make them slaves, he proceeds to destroy their children, ver. 16. He fell not on them all at once, but by degrees. And this may suffice to show, in general, that sin is deceitful, and the advantages that it hath thereby.

As for the way, and manner, and progress of sin in working by deceit, we have it fully expressed by the apostle James; "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," chap. i. 14, 15. This place, declaring the whole of what we aim at in this matter, must be particularly insisted on.

In the foregoing verse the apostle manifests that men are willing to drive the old trade which our first parents, at the entrance of sin, set up with, namely, of excusing themselves in their sins, and casting the occasion and blame of them on others. It is not, say they, from themselves, their own nature and inclinations, their own designings, that they have committed such and such evils, but merely from their temptations: and if they know not where to fix the evil of those temptations, they will lay them on God himself, rather than go without an extenuation of their guilt. This evil, in the hearts of men, the apostle rebuketh; "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man," ver. 13. And to show the justness of this reproof, in the words mentioned he discovers the true causes of the rise and whole progress of sin; ma-

nifesting that the whole guilt of it lies upon the sinner, and that the whole punishment of it, if not graciously prevented, will be his lot also.

We have therefore, as was said, in these words, the whole progress of lust or indwelling sin, by the way of subtilty, fraud, and deceit, expressed and limited by the Holy Ghost. And from hence we shall manifest the particular ways and means whereby it puts forth its power and efficacy in the heart of men by deceitfulness and subtilty; and we may observe in the words, [1.] The utmost end aimed at in all the actings of sin, or the tendency of it in its own nature, and that is, death; "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;" the everlasting death of the sinner. Pretend what it will, this is the end it aims at and tends unto. Hiding of ends and designs, is the principal property of deceit. This sin doth to the utmost; other things innumerable it pleads, but not once declares that it aims at the death, the everlasting death of the soul. And a fixed apprehension of this end of every sin, is a blessed means to prevent its prevalency in its way of deceit or beguiling. [2.] The general way of its acting towards that end is by temptation; "every man is tempted of his own lust." I purpose not to speak in general of the nature of temptations; it belongs not unto our present purpose; and besides, I have done it elsewhere. It may suffice at present to observe, that the life of temptation lies in deceit. So that, in the business of sin, to be effectually tempted, and to be beguiled or deceived, are the same. Thus it was in the first temptation; it is every where called the serpent's beguiling or deceiving, as was manifested before; "the serpent beguiled Eve," that is, prevailed by his temptations upon her. So that every man is tempted, that is, every man is beguiled or deceived, by his own lust or

indwelling sin, which we have often declared to be the same.

The degrees whereby sin proceedeth in this work of tempting or deceiving are five. For we showed before that this belongs to the nature of deceit, that it works by degrees, taking advantage by one step to gain another.

The first of these consists in drawing off, or drawing away; "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." The second is in enticing; "and is enticed." The third, in the conception of sin; "when lust hath conceived;" when the heart is enticed, then lust conceives in it. The fourth is, the bringing forth of sin in its actual accomplishment; "when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin." In all which there is a secret allusion to the crime of adultery and its fruits. The fifth is, "the finishing of sin," the completing of it, the filling up the measure of it, whereby the end originally designed by lust, is brought about: "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." As lust conceiving naturally and necessarily bringeth forth sin, so sin finished infallibly procureth eternal death.

The first of these relates to the mind; that is drawn off or drawn away by the deceit of sin. The second unto the affections; they are enticed or entangled. The third to the will, wherein sin is conceived, the consent of the will being the formal conception of actual sin. The fourth to the conversation, wherein sin is brought forth; it exerts itself in the lives and courses of men. The fifth respects an obdurate course in sinning, that finishes, consummates, and shuts up the whole work of sin; whereon ensues death, or eternal ruin.

I shall principally consider the three first, wherein

the main strength of the deceit of sin doth lie; and that because in believers, whose state and condition is principally proposed to consideration, God is pleased for the most part graciously to prevent the fourth instance, or the bringing forth of actual sins in their conversations: and the last always and wholly, or their being obdurate in a course of sin to the finishing of it. What ways God, in his grace and faithfulness, makes use of to stifle the conceptions of sin in the womb, and to hinder its actual production in the lives of men, must afterwards be spoken to. The first three instances, then, we shall insist upon fully, as those wherein the principal concernment of believers in this matter doth lie.

I. The first thing which sin is said to do, working in a way of deceit, is to draw away or to draw off: whence a man is said to be drawn off, or drawn away and diverted, namely, from attending to that course of obedience and holiness which, in opposition to sin and the law thereof, he is bound with diligence to attend unto.

Now it is the mind that this effect of the deceit of sin is wrought upon. The mind or understanding, as we have shown, is the guiding, conducting faculty of the soul; it goes before in discerning, judging, and determining, to make the way of moral actions fair and smooth to the will and affections. It is to the soul what Moses told his father-in-law that he might be to the people in the wilderness, "instead of eyes," to guide them, and keep them from wandering in that desolate place. It is the eye of the soul, without whose guidance the will and affections would perpetually wander in the wilderness of this world, according as any object with an appearance of present good did offer or present itself unto them.

The first thing therefore that sin aims at, in its deceitful working, is to draw off and divert the mind from the discharge of its duty.

There are two things which belong unto the duty of the mind, in that special office which it hath in and about the obedience which God requireth: first, to keep itself and the whole soul in such a frame and posture, as may render it ready unto all duties of obedience, and watchful against all enticements unto the conception of sin: secondly, in particular, carefully to attend unto all particular actions, that they be performed as God requireth, agreeable unto his will, for matter, manner, time, and season; as also for the obviating all particular proposals of sin in things forbidden. In these two things consists the whole duty of the mind of a believer. And from both of them doth indwelling sin endeavour to divert it and draw it off.

1. The first of these is the duty of the mind in reference unto the general frame and course of the whole soul: and hereof two things may be considered. First, that it is founded in a due constant consideration, (1.) Of ourselves, of sin, and its vileness. (2.) Of God, of his grace and goodness. And both these doth sin labour to draw it off from.

(1.) It endeavours to draw it off from a due consideration, apprehension, and sensibleness of its own vileness, and the danger wherewith it is attended. This, in the first place, we shall remark upon. A due constant consideration of sin, in its nature, in all its aggravating circumstances, in its end and tendency, especially as represented in the blood and cross of Christ, ought always to abide with us; "Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God," Jer. ii.

19. Every sin is a forsaking the Lord our God. If the heart know not, if it consider not, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, evil in itself, bitter in its effects, fruit, and event, it will never be secured against it. Besides, that frame of heart which is most accepted with God in any sinner, is the humble, contrite, self-abasing frame; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. See also Luke xviii. 13, 14. This becomes a sinner; no garment sits so decently about him. "Be clothed with humility," saith the apostle, 1 Pet. v. 5. It is that which becomes us, and it is the only safe frame. He that walketh humbly walketh safely. This is the design of Peter's advice, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear," 1 Epist. i. 17. After that he himself had miscarried by another frame of mind, he gives this advice to all believers. It is not a bondage, servile fear, disquieting and perplexing the soul, but such a fear as may keep men constantly calling upon the Father, with reference to the final judgment, that they may be preserved from sin, whereof they were in so great danger: this he advises them unto; "if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." This is the humble frame of soul; and how is this obtained? how is this preserved? No otherwise but by a constant deep apprehension of the evil, vileness, and danger of sin. So was it wrought, so was it kept up, in the approved publican; "God be merciful," saith he, "to me a sinner." Sense of sin kept him humble, and humility

made way for his access unto a testimony of the pardon of sin.

And this is, through grace, the great preservative from sin, as we have an example in the instance of Joseph. Upon the urgency of his great temptation, he recoils immediately into this frame of spirit; "How," saith he, "can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. A constant steady sense of the evil of sin, gives him such preservation that he ventures liberty and life in opposition to it. To fear sin is to fear the Lord; so the holy man tells us that they are the same; "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding," Job xxviii. 28.

This therefore, in the first place, in general, doth the law of sin put forth its deceit about, namely, to draw the mind from this frame, which is the strongest fort of the soul's defence and security. It labours to divert the mind from a due apprehension of the vileness, abomination, and danger of sin. It secretly and insensibly insinuates lessening, excusing, extenuating thoughts of it; or it draws it off from pondering upon it, from being conversant about it in its thoughts so much as it ought and formerly hath been. And if, after the heart of a man hath, through the word, Spirit, and grace of Christ, been made tender, soft, deeply sensible of sin, it becomes, on any account, or by any means whatever, to have less, fewer, slighter, or less affecting thoughts of it or about it, the mind of that man is drawn away by the deceitfulness of sin.

There are two ways, amongst others, whereby the law of sin endeavours deceitfully to draw off the mind from this duty and frame ensuing thereon.

[1.] It doth it by a horrible abuse of gospel grace. There is in the gospel a remedy provided against the

whole evil of sin, the filth, the guilt of it, with all its dangerous consequents. It is the doctrine of the deliverance of the souls of men from sin and death, a discovery of the gracious will of God towards sinners by Jesus Christ. What now is the genuine tendency of this doctrine, of this discovery of grace, and what ought we to use and improve it unto? This the apostle declares; "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. This it teacheth, this we ought to learn of it and by it. Hence universal holiness is called a "conversation that becometh the gospel," Phil. i. 27. It becomes it as that which is answerable unto its end, aim, and design; as that which it requires, and which it ought to be improved unto. And accordingly, it doth produce this effect where the word of it is received and preserved in a saving light, Rom. xii. 2; Eph. iv. 20—24. But herein doth the deceit of sin interpose itself. It separates between the doctrine of grace and the use and end of it. It stays upon its notions, and intercepts its influences in its proper application. From the doctrine of the assured pardon of sin, it insinuates a regardlessness of sin. God in Christ makes the proposition, and Satan and sin make the conclusion. For, that the deceitfulness of sin is apt to plead for a regardlessness of it from the grace of God whereby it is pardoned, the apostle declares in his reproof and detestation of such an insinuation; "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid," Rom. vi. 1, 2. Men's deceitful hearts, saith he, are apt to make that conclusion; but far be it from us that we should give any entertainment unto

it. But yet that some have evidently improved that deceit to their own eternal ruin, Jude declares; "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," Jude, ver. 4. And we have had dreadful instances of it in the days of temptation wherein we have lived.

Indeed, in opposition to this deceit lies much of the wisdom of faith and power of gospel grace. When the mind is fully possessed with, and cast habitually and firmly into the mould of, the notion and doctrine of gospel truth about the full and free forgiveness of all sins in the blood of Christ, then to be able to keep the heart always in a deep humbling sense of sin, abhorrency of it, and self-abasement for it, is a great effect of gospel wisdom and grace. This is the trial and touchstone of gospel light. If it keep the heart sensible of sin, humble, lowly, and broken on that account; if it teach us to water a free pardon with tears, to detest forgiven sin, to watch diligently for the ruin of that which we are yet assured shall never ruin us; it is divine, from above, of the Spirit of grace. If it secretly and insensibly make men loose and slight in their thoughts about sin, it is adulterate, selfish, false. If it will be all, answer all ends, it is nothing.

Hence it comes to pass that sometimes we see men, walking in a bondage frame of spirit all their days, low in their light, mean in their apprehensions of grace, so that it is hard to discern which covenant in their principles they belong unto, whether they are under the law or under grace; yet walk with a more conscientious tenderness of sinning than many who are advanced into higher degrees of light and knowledge than they. Not that the saving light of the gospel is not the only principle of saving holiness and obedience, but that, through the deceitfulness of sin,

it is variously abused to countenance the soul in manifold neglect of duties, and to draw off the mind from a due consideration of the nature, desert, and danger of sin. And this is done several ways.

One is, that the soul having frequent need of relief by gospel grace against a sense of the guilt of sin and accusation of the law, comes at length to make it a common and ordinary thing, and such as may be slightly performed. Having found a good medicine for its wounds, and such as it hath had experience of its efficacy, it comes to apply it slightly, and rather skinneth over than cureth its sores. A little less earnestness, a little less diligence, serves every time, until the soul it may be begins to secure itself of pardon of course. And this tends directly to draw off the mind from its constant and universal watchfulness against sin. He whose light hath made his way of access plain for the obtaining of pardon, if he be not very watchful, is far more apt to become slight, formal, and careless in his work, than he who by reason of mists and darkness beats about to find his way aright to the throne of grace: as a man that hath often travelled a road, passeth on without regard or inquiry; but he who is a stranger to it, observing all turnings, and inquiring of all passengers, secures his journey beyond the other.

Again, the deceitfulness of sin takes advantage from the doctrine of grace, by many ways and means, to extend the bounds of the soul's liberty beyond what God hath assigned unto it. Some have never thought themselves free from a legal bondage frame until they have been brought into the confines of sensuality, and some into the depths of it. How often will sin plead that this strictness, this exactness, this solicitude, is no ways needful; relief is provided in the gospel against

such things; would you live as though there were no need of the gospel, as though pardon of sin were to no purpose? But concerning these pleas of sin from gospel grace, we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter.

Further, in times of temptation this deceitfulness of sin will argue expressly for sin, from gospel grace. At least it will plead for these two things. First, that there is no need of such a tenacious, severe contending against it as the principle of the new creature is fixed on. If it cannot divert the soul or mind wholly from attending unto temptations to oppose them, yet it will endeavour to draw them off as to the manner of their attendance. They need not use that diligence which at first the soul apprehends to be necessary. Secondly, it will be tendering relief as to the event of sin, that it shall not turn to the ruin or destruction of the soul, because it is, it will, or it may be, pardoned by the grace of the gospel. And this is true; this is the great and only relief of the soul against sin the guilt whereof it hath contracted already; the blessed and only remedy for a guilty soul. But when it is pleaded and remembered by the deceitfulness of sin in compliance with temptation unto sin, then it is poison; poison is mixed in every drop of this balsam, to the danger, if not death, of the soul. And this is the first way whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind from a due attendance unto that sense of its vileness, which alone is able to keep it in that humble, self-abased frame that is acceptable with God. It makes the mind careless, as though its work were needless because of the abounding of grace; which is a soldier's neglect of his station, trusting to a reserve, provided indeed only in case of his keeping his own proper place.

[2.] Sin takes advantage from the state and condition of men in the world, to work by its deceit in this matter of drawing off the mind from a due sense of it. I shall give only one instance of its procedure in this method. Men, in their younger days, have naturally their affections more quick, vigorous, and active, more sensibly working in them, than afterwards. These do, as to their sensible working and operation, naturally decay, and many things befall men in their lives that take off the edge and keenness of them. But as men lose in their affections, if they are not besotted in sensuality or by the corruptions that are in the world through lust, they grow and improve in their understandings, resolutions, and judgments. Hence it is that if what had place formerly in their affections do not take place in their minds and judgments, they utterly lose them, these have no more place in their souls. Thus men have no regard for, yea they utterly despise, those things which their affections were set upon with delight and greediness in their childhood. But if they are things that by any means come to be fixed in their minds and judgments, they continue a high esteem for them, and do cleave as close unto them as they did when their affections were most vigorous; only, as it were, they have changed their seat in the soul. It is thus in things spiritual. The first and chiefest seat of the sensibility to sin, is in the affections. As these, in natural youth, are great and large, so are they spiritually in spiritual youth; "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals," Jer. ii. 2. Besides, such persons are newly come off from their convictions, wherein they have been cut to the heart and so made tender. Whatever touches a wound is thoroughly felt; so doth the guilt of sin before the wound given by conviction be

thoroughly cured. But now, when affections begin to decay naturally, they begin to decay also as to their sensible actions and motions in things spiritual. Although they improve in grace, yet they may decay in sense. At least, spiritual sense is not radically in them, but only by way of communication. Now in these decays, if the soul take not care to fix a deep sense of sin on the mind and judgment, thereby perpetually to affect the heart and affections, it will decay. And here the deceit of the law of sin interposeth itself. It suffers a sense of sin to decay in the affections, and diverts the mind from entertaining a due, constant, fixed consideration of it. We may consider this a little in persons that never make a progress in the ways of God beyond conviction. How sensible of sin will they be for a season! How will they then mourn and weep under a sense of the guilt of it! How will they cordially and heartily resolve against it! Affections are vigorous, and as it were bear rule in their souls. But they are like a herb that will flourish a day or two with watering, although it have no root. For, a while after we see that these men, the more experience they have had of sin, the less they are afraid of it, as the wise man intimates, Eccles. viii. 11; and at length they come to be the greatest contemners of sin in the world. No sinner like him that hath sinned away his convictions of sin. What is the reason of this? Sense of sin, in their convictions, was fixed on their affections; as it decayed in them, they took no care to have it deeply and graciously fixed on their minds. This the deceitfulness of sin deprived them of, and so ruined their souls. In some measure it is so with believers. If, as the sensibility of the affections decays; if, as they grow heavy and obtuse, great wisdom and grace be not used to fix a due sense of sin upon the mind

and judgment, which may provoke, excite, enliven, and stir up the affections every day; great decays will ensue. At first, sorrow, trouble, grief, fear, affected the mind, and would give it no rest. If, afterwards, the mind do not affect the heart with sorrow and grief, the whole will be cast out, and the soul be in danger of being hardened. And these are some of the ways whereby the deceit of sin diverts the mind from the first part of its safe, preserving frame, or draws it off from its constant watchfulness against sin and all the effects of it.

(2.) The second part of this general duty of the mind is, to keep the soul unto a constant, holy consideration of God and his grace. This evidently lies at the spring-head of gospel obedience. The way whereby sin draws off the mind from this part of its duty, is open and known sufficiently, though not sufficiently watched against. Now this the Scripture every where declares to be, the filling of the minds of men with earthly things. This it placeth in direct opposition to that heavenly frame of the mind which is the spring of gospel obedience; "set your affections," or set your minds, "on things above, not on things on the earth," Col. iii. 2. As if he had said, on both together you cannot be set or fixed, so as principally and chiefly to mind them both. And the affections to the one and the other, proceeding from these different principles of minding the one and the other, are opposed as directly inconsistent; "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. And actings in a course suitable to these affections are proposed also as contrary; "ye cannot serve God and mammon." These are two masters, whom no man can serve at the same

time to the satisfaction of both. Every inordinate minding, then, of earthly things, is opposed unto that frame wherein our minds ought to be fixed on God and his grace, in a course of gospel obedience.

Several ways there are whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind in this particular; but the chief of them is, by pressing these things on the mind, under the notion of things lawful and, it may be, necessary. So all those who excuse themselves, in the parable, from coming in to the marriage-feast of the gospel, did it on the account of their being engaged in their lawful callings; one about his farm, another his oxen, the means whereby he ploughed in this world. By this plea were the minds of men drawn off from that frame of heavenliness which is required to our walking with God; and the rules, of not loving the world, or using it as if we used it not, are hereby neglected. What wisdom, what watchfulness, what serious frequent trial and examination of ourselves is required, to keep our hearts and minds in a heavenly frame, in the use and pursuit of earthly things, it is not my present business to declare. This is evident, that the engine whereby the deceit of sin draws off and turns aside the mind in this matter, is the pretence of the lawfulness of things about which it would have it exercise itself, against which very few are armed with sufficient diligence, wisdom, and skill. And this is the first and most general attempt that indwelling sin makes upon the soul by deceit: it draws away the mind from a diligent attention unto its course, in a due sense of the evil of sin, and a due and constant consideration of God and his grace.

CHAPTER IX.

The deceit of sin in drawing off the mind from a due attendance unto especial duties of obedience; instanced in meditation and prayer.

How sin, by its deceit, endeavours to draw off the mind from attending to that holy frame of walking with God wherein the soul ought to be preserved, hath been declared. Proceed we now to show,

2. How it doth the same work in reference to those especial duties by which the designs, workings, and prevalency of it may, in an especial manner, be obviated and prevented. Sin indeed maintains an enmity against all duties of obedience; or rather, against God in them. "When I would do good," saith the apostle, "evil is present with me." Whenever I would do good, or what good soever I would do, that is, spiritually good, good in reference unto God, it is present with me, to hinder me from it, to oppose me in it. And on the other side, all duties of obedience do lie directly against the actings of the law of sin. For as the flesh, in all its actings, lusteth against the Spirit, so the Spirit, in all its actings, lusteth against the flesh. And therefore, every duty performed in the strength and grace of the Spirit, is contrary to the law of sin. "If ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh," Rom. viii. 13. Actings of the Spirit of grace in duties, doth this work. These two are contrary. But yet there are some duties which, in their own nature, and by God's appointment, have a peculiar influence unto the weakening and subduing the whole law of sin in its very principles and chiefest strengths; and these the mind of a believer ought

principally, in his whole course, to attend unto. And these doth sin, in its deceit, endeavour principally to draw off the mind from. As in diseases of the body, some remedies, they say, have a specific quality against distempers; so in this disease of the soul, there are some duties that have an especial virtue against this sinful distemper. I shall not insist on many of them, but instance only in two, which seem to me to be of this nature, namely, that by God's designation they have a special tendency towards the ruin of the law of sin. And then we shall show the ways, methods, and means, which the law of sin useth to divert the mind from a due attendance unto them. Now these duties are, first, prayer, especially private prayer; and, secondly, meditation. I put them together, because they much agree in their general nature and end, differing only in the manner of their performance. For by meditation I intend, meditating upon what relation and suitableness there is between the word and our own hearts, to this end that they may be brought to a more exact conformity. It is our pondering on the truth as it is in Jesus, to find out the image and representation of it in our own hearts. And so it hath the same intent with prayer, which is to bring our souls into a frame in all things answering the mind and will of God. They are as the blood and spirits in the veins, that have the same life, motion, and use. But yet because persons are generally at a great loss in this duty of meditation, having declared it to be of so great efficacy for the controlling of the actings of the law of sin, I shall, in our passage, give briefly two or three rules for the directing of believers to a right performance of this great duty; and they are these.

[1.] Meditate of God with God; that is, when

we would undertake thoughts and meditations of God, his excellences, his properties, his glory, his majesty, his love, his goodness, let it be done in a way of speaking unto God, in a deep humiliation and abasement of our souls before him. This will fix the mind, and draw it forth from one thing to another to give glory unto God in a due manner, and will affect the soul, until it be brought into that holy admiration of God, and delight in him, which is acceptable unto him. My meaning is, that it be done in a way of prayer and praise, speaking unto God.

[2.] Meditate on the word in the word; that is, in the reading of it consider the sense in the particular passages we insist on, looking to God for help, guidance, and direction, in the discovery of his mind and will therein; and then labour to have your hearts affected with it.

[3.] What we come short of in evenness and constancy in our thoughts in these things, let it be made up in frequency. Some are discouraged because their minds do not regularly supply them with thoughts to carry on their meditations, through the weakness or imperfection of their inventions. Let this be supplied by frequent returns of the mind unto the subject proposed to be meditated upon, whereby new senses will still be supplied unto it. But this by the way.

These duties, I say, amongst others, (for we have only chosen them for an instance, not excluding some others from the same place, office, and usefulness with them,) do make an especial opposition to the very being or life of indwelling sin; or rather, faith in them doth so. They are perpetually designing its utter ruin. I shall therefore, in respect to this example, in the pursuit of our present purpose, do these two

things: (1.) Show the suitableness and usefulness of this duty, or these duties, as I shall handle them jointly, unto the ruin of sin: (2.) Show the means whereby the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from a due attendance unto them.

(1.) For the first, observe,

[1.] That it is the proper work of the soul in this duty to consider all the secret workings and actings of sin, what advantages it hath got, what temptations it is in conjunction with, what harm it hath already done, and what it is yet further ready to do. Hence David gives that title to one of his prayers, Psalm. cii.; "a prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." I speak of that prayer which is attended with a due consideration of all the wants, straits, and emergencies of the soul. Without this, prayer is not prayer; that is, whatever show or appearance of that duty it hath, it is no way useful either to the glory of God or the good of the souls of men. A cloud it is without water, driven by the wind of the breath of men. Nor was there ever any more present and effectual poison for souls found out, than the binding of them unto a constant form and usage of I know not what words in their prayers and supplications, which themselves do not understand. Bind men so in their trades or in their businesses in this world, and they will quickly find the effect of it. By this means they are disabled from any due consideration of what at present is good for them or evil unto them; without which, to what use can prayer serve, but to mock God and delude men's own souls? But in this kind of prayer which we insist on the Spirit of God falls in to give us his assistance, and that in this very matter of finding out and discovering the most secret

actings and workings of the law of sin. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but he helps our infirmities," Rom. viii. 26. He discovers our wants unto us, and wherein chiefly we stand in need of help and relief. And we find it by daily experience, that in prayer believers are led into such discoveries and convictions of the secret deceitful work of sin in their hearts, as no considerations could ever have led them into. So David, designing the confession of his actual sin, Psa. li. having, in his prayer, his wound searched by the skilful hand of the Spirit of God, had a discovery made unto him of the root of all his miscarriages, in his original corruption; see ver. 5. The Spirit, in this duty, is as the candle of the Lord unto the soul, enabling it to search all the inward parts of the belly. It gives a holy, spiritual light into the mind; enabling it to search the deep and dark recesses of the heart; to find out the subtle and deceitful machinations, figments, and imaginations of the law of sin therein. Whatever motion there be of it, whatever power and prevalency in it, it is laid hand on, apprehended, brought into the presence of God, judged, condemned, bewailed. And what can possibly be more effectual for its ruin and destruction? For, together with its discovery, application is made unto all that relief which, in Jesus Christ, is provided against it, to all ways and means whereby it may be ruined. Hence it is the duty of the mind, "to watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7; to attend diligently unto the estate of our souls, and to deal fervently and effectually with God about it. The like also may be said of meditation, wisely managed unto its proper end.

[2.] In this duty there is wrought upon the heart a deep, full sense of the vileness of sin, with a

constant, renewed detestation of it; which, if any thing, undoubtedly tends to its ruin. This is one design of prayer, one end of the soul in it, namely, to draw forth sin, to set it in order, to present sin unto itself in its vileness, abomination, and aggravating circumstances, that it may be loathed, abhorred, and cast away as a filthy thing, Isa. xxx. 22. He that pleads with God for sin's remission, pleads also with his own heart for its detestation, Hos. xiv. 3. Herein also sin is judged in the name of God; for the soul, in its confession, subscribes unto God's detestation of it and the sentence of his law against it. There is, indeed, a course of these duties which convinced persons do give up themselves unto as a mere covert to their lusts; they cannot sin quietly, unless they perform duty constantly. But that prayer we speak of is a thing of another nature, a thing that will allow no composition with sin, much less will serve the ends of the deceit of it, as the other formal prayer doth. It will not be bribed into a secret compliance with any of the enemies of God or the soul, no, not for a moment. And hence it is that oftentimes in this duty the heart is raised to the most sincere, effectual sense of sin and detestation of it that the soul ever obtains in its whole course of obedience. And this evidently tends also to the weakening and ruin of the law of sin.

[3.] This is the way appointed and blessed of God, to obtain strength and power against sin; doth any man lack? let him ask of God, Jam. i. 5. Prayer is the way of obtaining from God, by Christ, a supply of all our wants, assistance against all opposition, especially that which is made against us by sin. This, I suppose, needs not to be insisted on; it is, in the notion and practice, clear to every believer. It is that wherein we call, and upon which the Lord Jesus

comes in to our succour, with suitable help in a time of need; Heb. ii. 17, 18.

[4.] Faith in prayer countermines all the workings of the deceit of sin; and that because the soul doth therein constantly engage itself unto God, to oppose all sin whatsoever. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments," Psa. cxix. 106. This is the language of every gracious soul in its addresses unto God: the inmost parts thereof engage themselves to God, to cleave to him in all things, and to oppose sin in all things. He that cannot do this, cannot pray. To pray with any other frame is to flatter God with our lips, which he abhorreth. And this exceedingly helps a believer, in pursuing sin unto its ruin.

For, first of all, if there be any secret lust that lies lurking in the heart, he will find it either rising up against this engagement, or using its artifices to secure itself from it. And hereby it is discovered, and the conviction of the heart concerning its evil furthered and strengthened. Sin makes the most certain discovery of itself, and never more evidently than when it is most severely pursued. Lusts in men are compared to hurtful and noisome beasts, or men themselves are so because of their lusts, Isa. xi. 6, 7. Now such beasts use themselves to their dens and coverts, and never discover themselves, at least so much in their proper nature and rage, as when they are most earnestly pursued. And so it is with sin and corruption in the heart.

Again, if any sin be prevalent in the soul, it will weaken and take the soul off from the universality of his engagement unto God; it will breed a tergiversation from it, a slightness in it. Now when this is observed, it will exceedingly awaken a gracious soul,

and stir it up to look about it. As a spontaneous lassitude, or a causeless weariness and indisposition of the body, is looked on as the sign of an approaching fever or some dangerous distemper, which stirs up men to use a timely and vigorous prevention that they be not seized upon by it; so it is in this case. When the soul of a believer finds in itself an indisposition to make fervent, sincere engagements of universal holiness unto God, it knows that there is some prevalent distemper in it, finds the place of it, and sets itself against it.

Further, whilst the soul can thus constantly engage itself unto God, it is certain that sin can rise unto no ruinous prevalency. Yea, it is a conquest over sin, a most considerable conquest, when the soul doth fully and clearly, without any secret reserve, come off with alacrity and resolutions in such an engagement; "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity," Psa. xviii. 23. And it may, upon such a success, triumph in the grace of God, and have good hope through faith that it shall have a final conquest, and that what it so resolves, shall be done; that it hath decreed a thing and it shall be established. And this tends to the disappointment, yea, to the ruin, of the law of sin.

Once more, if the heart be not deceived by cursed hypocrisy, this engagement unto God will greatly influence it unto a peculiar diligence and watchfulness against all sin. There is no greater evidence of hypocrisy, than to have the heart say, like the whorish woman, I have paid my vows, now I may take myself unto my sin, Prov. vii. 14, 15; or to be negligent about sin, as being satisfied that it hath prayed against it. It is otherwise in a gracious soul. Sense and conscience of engagements against sin made to God,

do make it universally watchful against all its motions and operations. On these and sundry other accounts, doth faith in this duty exert itself peculiarly, to the weakening of the power, and stopping of the progress, of the law of sin.

If, then, the mind be diligent in its watch and charge to preserve the soul from the efficacy of sin, it will carefully attend to this duty and the due performance of it, which is of such singular advantage unto its end and purpose. Here therefore,

(2.) Sin puts forth its deceit in its own defence; it labours to divert and draw off the mind from attending unto this and the like duties. And there are, among others, three engines, three ways and means, whereby it attempts the accomplishment of its design.

[1.] It makes advantage of its weariness unto the flesh. There is an aversation, as hath been declared, in the law of sin unto all immediate communion with God. Now this duty is such. There is nothing accompanieth it whereby the carnal part of the soul may be gratified or satisfied, as there may be somewhat of that nature in most public duties, in most that a man can do beyond pure acts of faith and love. No relief or advantage, then, coming in by it but what is purely spiritual, it becomes wearisome, burdensome to flesh and blood. It is like travelling alone, without companion or diversion, which makes the way seem long, but brings the passenger with most speed to his journey's end. So our Saviour declares, when, expecting his disciples, according to their duty and present distress, should have been engaged in this work, he found them fast asleep; "The spirit," saith he, "indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 41: and out of that weakness grew their indisposition unto, and weariness of, their

duty. So God complains of his people; "Thou hast been weary of me," Isa. xliii. 22. And it may come at length unto that height which is thus expressed, "Ye have said, Behold what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts," Mal. i. 13. The Jews suppose that it was the language of men when they brought their offerings or sacrifices on their shoulders, which they pretended wearied them, and they panted and blowed as men ready to faint under them, when they brought only the torn, and the lame, and the sick. But so is this duty oftentimes to the flesh. And this the deceitfulness of sin makes use of, to draw the heart by insensible degrees from a constant attendance unto it. It puts in for the relief of the weak and weary flesh. There is a compliance between spiritual flesh and natural flesh in this matter; they help one another; and an aversation unto this duty is the effect of their compliance. So it was in the spouse, Cant. v. 2, 3. She was asleep, drowsing in her spiritual condition, and pleads her natural unfitness to rouse herself from that state. If the mind be not diligently watchful to prevent insinuations from hence; if it dwell not constantly on those considerations which evidence an attendance unto this duty to be indispensable; if it stir not up the principle of grace in the heart, to retain its rule and sovereignty, and not to be dallied withal by foolish pretences; it will be drawn off, which is the effect aimed at.

[2.] The deceitfulness of sin makes use of corrupt reasonings, taken from the pressing and urging occasions of life. Should we, says it in the heart, attend strictly unto all duties in this kind, we should neglect our principal occasions, and be useless to ourselves and others in the world. And on this general account, particular businesses dispossess particular duties from

their due place and time. Men have not leisure to glorify God, and save their own souls. It is certain that God gives us time enough for all that he requires of us, in any kind, in this world. No duties need to jostle one another, I mean constantly. Especial occasions must be determined according to especial circumstances. But if in any thing we take more upon us than we have time well to perform it in, without robbing God of that which is due to him and our own souls, this God calls not unto, this he blesseth us not in. It is more tolerable that our duties of holiness and regard to God, should intrench upon the duties of our callings and employments in this world, than the contrary; and yet neither doth God require this at our hands in an ordinary manner or course. How little then will he bear with that which evidently is so much worse upon all accounts whatever! But yet, through the deceitfulness of sin, thus are the souls of men beguiled. By several degrees they are at length driven from their duty.

[3.] It deals with the mind to draw it off from its attendance unto this duty, by a tender of a compensation to be made in and by other duties; as Saul thought to compensate his disobedience by sacrifice. May not the same duty, performed in public or in the family, suffice? And if the soul be so foolish as not to answer, that those things ought to be done and this not to be left undone, it may be insnared and deceived. For besides a command to it, namely, that we should personally watch unto prayer, there is, as hath been declared, sundry advantages in this duty so performed against the deceit and efficacy of sin, which, in the most public attendance unto it, it hath not. These, sin strives to deprive the soul of by this commutation, which by its corrupt reasonings it tenders unto it.

I may add here, that which hath place in all the workings of sin by deceit, namely, its feeding the soul with promises and purposes of a more diligent attendance unto this duty when occasions will permit. By this means it brings the soul to say unto its convictions of duty, as Felix did to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," Acts xxiv. 25. And by this means oftentimes the present season and time, which alone is ours, is lost irrecoverably.

These are some of the ways and means whereby the deceit of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from its due attendance unto this duty, which is so peculiarly suited to prevent its progress and prevalency, and which aims so directly and immediately at its ruin. I might instance also in other duties of the like tendency; but this may suffice to discover the nature of this part of the deceit of sin. And this is the first way whereby it makes way for the further entangling of the affections, and the conception of sin. When sin hath wrought this effect on any one, he is said to be drawn away, to be diverted from what in his mind he ought constantly to attend unto in his walking before the Lord.

And this will instruct us to see and discern where lies the beginning of our declensions and failings in the ways of God; and that, either as to our general course, or as to our attendance unto especial duties. And this is of great importance and concernment to us. When the beginnings and occasions of a sickness or distemper of body are known, it is a great advantage to direct in and unto the cure of it. God, to recall Zion to himself, shows her where was the beginning of her sin, Micah i. 13. Now this is that which for the most part is the beginning of sin unto us,

ven the drawing off the mind from a due attendance, n all things unto the discharge of its duty. The rincipal care and charge of the soul lies on the mind; nd if that fail of its duty, the whole is betrayed, ither as unto its general frame, or as unto particular iscarriages. The failing of the mind is like the fail-ng of the watchman in Ezekiel, the whole is lost by is neglect. This, therefore, in that self-scrutiny and earch which we are called to, we are most diligently o inquire after. God doth not look at what duties e perform as to their number and tale, or as to their ature merely, but whether we do them with that ntention of mind and spirit which he requireth. Iany men perform duties in a road or course, and do ot as it were so much as think of them. Their inds are filled with other things, only duty takes up o much of their time. This is but an endeavour to ock God and deceive their own souls. Would you erefore take the true measure of yourselves, consider ow it is with you as to the duty of your minds which e have inquired after. Consider whether, by any of e deceits mentioned, you have not been diverted and rawn away; and if there be any decays upon you of y kind, you will find that there hath been the be-inning of them. By one way or other your minds ave been made heedless, regardless, slothful, uncer-in, being beguiled and drawn off from their duty. onsider the charge, Prov. iv. 23—27. May not ch a soul say, If I had attended more diligently, if had considered more wisely the vile nature of sin, I had not suffered my mind to be possessed with in hopes and foolish imaginations by a cursed abuse gospel grace, if I had not permitted it to be filled ith the things of the world and to become negligent attending unto especial duties; I had not, at this

day, been thus sick, weak, thriftless, wounded, decayed, defiled. My careless, my deceived mind, hath been the beginning of sin and transgression unto my soul. And this discovery will direct the soul unto a suitable way for its healing and recovery; which will never be effected by a multiplying of particular duties, but by a restoring of the mind, Psa. xxiii. 3.

And this also doth hence appear to be the great means of preserving our souls, both as to their general frame and particular duties, according to the mind and will of God, namely, to endeavour after a sound and stedfast mind. It is a signal grace to have the spirit of power, and love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. A stable, solid, resolved mind in the things of God, not easily moved, diverted, changed, nor drawn aside; a mind not apt to hearken after corrupt reasonings, vain insinuations, or pretences to draw it off from its duty; this is that which the apostle exhorts believers unto; "therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. The stedfastness of our minds, abiding in their duty, is the cause of all our unmovableness and fruitfulness in obedience. And so Peter tells us, that those who are by any means led away or enticed "fall from their own stedfastness," 2 Pet. iii. 17. And the great blame that is laid upon backsliders is, that they are not stedfast, "their spirit was not stedfast," Psalm lxxviii. 8. For if the soul be safe, and the mind not drawn off from its duty, the soundness and stedfastness of the mind is its great preservative. And there are three parts of this stedfastness of the mind. First, a full purpose of cleaving to God in all things: secondly, a daily renovation and quickening of the heart unto a discharge of this purpose: thirdly, resolutions against all dalliance or

parleys about negligences in that discharge; which are not here to be spoken unto.

CHAPTER X.

The deceit of sin, in drawing off the mind from its attendance unto particular duties, further discovered. Several things required in the mind of believers, with respect unto particular duties of obedience. Actings of sin, in a way of deceit, to divert the mind from them.

We have not, as yet, brought unto an issue the first way of the working of the deceit of sin, namely, in its drawing away of the mind from the discharge of its duty; which we insist upon the longer upon a double account.

First of all, because of its importance and concernment. If the mind be drawn off, if it be tainted, weakened, turned aside from a due and strict attendance to its charge and office, the whole soul, will, and affections, are certainly entangled and drawn into sin; as hath been in part declared, and will afterwards further appear. This we ought, therefore, to give diligent heed unto, which is the design of the apostle's exhortation; "therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip," Heb. ii. 1. It is a failure of our minds by the deceitfulness of sin, in losing the life, power, sense, and impression of the word, which he cautions us against. And there is no way to prevent it, but by giving most earnest heed unto the things which we have heard; which expresseth the whole duty of our minds in attending unto obedience.

And, in the next place, because the actings and workings of the mind, being spiritual, are such as the conscience, unless clearly enlightened, and duly excited and stirred up, is not affected withal, so as to take due notice of them. Conscience is not apt to exercise reflex acts upon the mind's failures, as principally respecting the acts of the whole soul. When the affections are entangled with sin, (of which afterwards,) or the will begins to conceive it, by its express consent, conscience is apt to make an uproar in the soul, and to give it no rest or quiet, until the soul be reclaimed, or itself be one way or other bribed or debauched. But these neglects of the mind being spiritual, without very diligent attendance they are seldom taken notice of. Our minds are often in the Scriptures called our spirits; "whom I serve in my spirit," Rom. i. 9; and are distinguished from the soul, which principally intends the affections, as in that distribution, "sanctify you wholly, your whole spirit and soul," that is, your mind and affections, 1 Thess. v. 23. It is true, where the term spirit is used to express spiritual gifts, it is in respect to those gifts opposed to our understanding, which is taken for the first act of the mind in a rational perception of things, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. But as that word is applied to any faculty of our souls, it is the mind that it expresseth. This then being our spirit, the actings of it are secret and hidden, and not to be discovered without spiritual wisdom and diligence. Let us not suppose then that we have dwelt too long on this consideration, which is of so great importance to us, and yet so hidden, and which we are apt to be very insensible of; whilst yet our carefulness in this matter is one of the best evidences that we have of our sincerity. Let us not then be like a man that is sensible and complains of a cut finger, but not of a decay of spirits

tending unto death. There remains, therefore, as to this head of our discourse, the consideration of the charge of the mind in reference to particular duties and sins; and in the consideration of it, we shall do these three things: (1.) Show what is required in the mind of a believer in reference unto particular duties. (2.) Declare the way of the working of the deceit of sin to draw it off from its attendance thereunto. The like also shall be done (3.) with respect unto particular sins, and their avoidance.

(1.) For the right performance of any duty, it is not enough that the thing required be itself performed, but that it be universally squared and fitted unto the rule of it. Herein lies the great duty of the mind, namely, to attend unto the rule of duties, and to take care that all the concernments of them be ordered thereby. Our progress in obedience is our edification or building. Now it is but a very little furtherance unto a building, that a man bring wood and stones, and heap them up together without order. They must be hewed and squared, and fitted by line and rule, if we intend to build. Nor is it any advantage unto our edification in faith and obedience that we multiply duties, if we heap them upon one another, if we order and dispose them not according to rule. And therefore doth God expressly reject a multitude of duties, when not universally suited unto the rule: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to bear them," Isa. i. 11, 14. And therefore, all acceptable obedience is called a proceeding according unto rule, "as many as walk according to this rule," Gal. vi. 16: it is a canonical or regular obedience. As letters in the alphabet heaped together signify nothing unless they are disposed into their proper order, no more do our

duties without this disposal. That they be so, is the great duty of the mind, which with all diligence it is to attend unto. "Walk circumspectly," exactly, accurately; that is, diligently in all things, Eph. v. 15: take heed to the rule of what you do. We walk in duties, but we walk circumspectly in this attention of the mind.

Further, there are some especial things which the rule directs unto, that the mind is to attend to in every duty; as,

[1.] That, as to the matter of it, it be full and complete. Under the law, no beast was allowed to be a sacrifice that had any member wanting, any defect of parts. Such were rejected, as well as those that were lame or blind. Duties must be complete as to the parts, the matter of them. There may be such a part of the price kept back, as may make the tendering of all the residue unacceptable. Saul, sparing Agag, and the fattest of the cattle, rendered the destroying of all the rest useless. Thus, when men will give alms, or perform other services, but not unto the proportion that the rule requireth, and which the mind by diligent attention unto it might discover, the whole duty is vitiated.

[2.] That, as to the principle of it, it be done in faith, and therein, by an actual derivation of strength from Christ, without whom we "can do nothing," John xv. 5. It is not enough that the person be a believer, though that be necessary unto every good work, Eph. ii. 10; but, also, that faith be peculiarly active in every duty that we do; for our whole obedience is "obedience of faith," that is, which the doctrine of faith requireth, and which the grace of faith beareth or bringeth forth, Rom. i. 5. So Christ is expressly said to be "our life," our spiritual life;

that is, the spring, author, and cause of it, Col. iii. 4. Now, as in life natural, no vital act can be performed but by the actual operation of the principle of life itself; so, in life spiritual, no spiritually vital act, that is, no duty acceptable to God, can be performed but by the actual working of Christ who is our life. And this is no other way derived unto us but by faith. Whence saith the apostle, "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. Not only was Christ his life, a living principle unto him, but he led a life, that is, discharged vital actions in all duties of holiness and obedience, by the faith of the Son of God, or in him; deriving supplies of grace and strength from him thereby. This therefore ought a believer diligently to attend unto, namely, that every thing he doth to God be done in the strength of Christ; which, wherein it consisteth, ought diligently to be inquired into by all who intend to walk with God.

[3.] In this respect to rule, the manner of the performance of every thing is to be regarded. Now there are two things in the manner of the performance of any duty, which a believer who is intrusted with spiritual light ought to attend unto. The first is that it be done in the way, and by the means, that God hath prescribed with respect to the outward manner of its performance. And this is especially to be regarded in duties of the worship of God, the matter and outward manner whereof do both equally fall under his command. If this be not regarded, the whole duty is vitiated. I speak not of them who suffer themselves to be deluded by the deceitfulness of sin utterly to disregard the rule of the word in such things, and to worship God according to their own

imagination; but of them principally who, although they in general profess to do nothing but what God requires and as he requires, yet do not diligently attend to the rule, to make the authority of God to be the sole cause and reason both of what they do and of the manner of the performance of it. And this is the reason that God so often calls on his people to consider diligently and wisely that they may do all according as he had commanded. Secondly, the affections of the heart and mind in duties belong to the performance of them in the inward manner. The prescriptions and commands of God for attendance hereunto are innumerable; and the want hereof renders every duty an abomination unto him. A sacrifice without a heart, without salt, without fire, of what value is it? No more are duties without spiritual affections. And herein is the mind to keep the charge of God; to see that the heart, which he requires, be tendered to him. And we find, also, that God requireth especial affections to accompany special duties; as, "he that gives, with cheerfulness;" which, if they are not attended unto, the whole is lost.

Again, the mind is to attend to the ends of duties, and herein, principally, to the glory of God in Christ. Several other ends will sin and self impose upon our duties. Especially, too, it will press hard upon us with, first, satisfaction of our convictions and consciences; secondly, the praise of men. For self-righteousness and ostentation are the main ends of men that are fallen off from God, in all moral duties whatsoever. In their sins they endeavour to satisfy their lust; in their duties, their convictions and pride. These the mind of a believer is diligently to watch against, and to keep up in all a single eye to the glory of God, as that which answers the great and

general rule of all our obedience; "whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." Unto these and the like things, I say, which are commonly spoken unto, is the mind of a believer obliged to attend diligently and constantly, with respect to all the particular duties of our walking before God.

(2.) Here, then, lies no small part of the deceit of sin; namely, to draw the mind off from this watch, to bring an inadvertency upon it, that it shall not, in these things, keep the watch and charge of the Lord. And if it can do so, and thereby strip our duties of all their excellences, which lie in these accompaniments of them that the mind is to attend unto, it will not much trouble itself nor us about the duties themselves. And this it attempts several ways.

[1.] By persuading the mind to content itself with generals, and to take it off from attending unto things in particular instances. For example; it would persuade the soul to rest satisfied in a general aim of doing things to the glory of God, without considering how every particular duty may have that tendency. Thus Saul thought that he had fulfilled his whole duty, and done the will of God, and sought his glory, in his war against Amalek, when, for want of attendance to every particular duty in that service, he had dishonoured God and ruined himself and his posterity. And men may persuade themselves that they have a general design for the glory of God, when they have no active principle in particular duties tending at all that way. But if, instead of fixing the mind by faith on the peculiar advancing of the glory of God in a duty, the soul contents itself with a general notion of doing so, the mind is already diverted and drawn off from its charge by the deceitfulness of sin. If a man be travelling in a journey, it is not only required of

him that he bend his course that way, and so go on; but, if he attend not unto every turning and other occurrences in his way, he may wander and never come to his journey's end. And if we suppose that in general we aim at the glory of God, as we all profess to do, whilst yet we attend not unto it distinctly, upon every duty that occurs in our way, we shall never attain the end aimed at. And he who satisfies himself with this general purpose, without acting it in every special duty, will not long retain that purpose neither. It doth the same work upon the mind, in reference unto the principle of our duty, as it doth unto the end. Their principle is, that they be done in faith, in the strength of Christ; but if men content themselves that they are believers, that they have faith, and do not labour in every particular duty to act faith, to lead their spiritual lives, in all the acts of them, "by the faith of the Son of God;" the mind is drawn off from its duty. It is in particular actions we express and exercise our faith and obedience; and what we are in them, that we are, and no more.

[2.] It draws off the mind from the duties before mentioned, by insinuating a secret contentment unto it from the duty itself performed as to the matter of it. This is a fair discharge of a natural conscience. If the duty be performed, though as to the manner of its performance it come short almost in all things of the rule, conscience and conviction will be satisfied. As Saul, upon his expedition against Amalek, cries to Samuel, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have done the commandment of the Lord." He satisfied himself, though he had not attended as he ought to the whole will of God in that matter. And thus was it with them, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?" Isa. lviii. 3. They had pleased

hemselves in the performance of their duties, and xpected that God also should be pleased with them. But he shows them at large wherein they had failed, nd that so far as to render what they had done an bomination. And the like charge he expresseth gainst them, chap. xlviii. 1, 2. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw the mind unto, namely, o be taken up in the performance of the duty itself. Pray thou oughtest, and thou hast prayed; give alms hou oughtest, and thou hast given alms; quiet then hyself in what thou hast done, and go on to do the ike. If it prevail herein, the mind is discharged rom further attendance and watching unto duty, vhich leaves the soul on the borders of many evils. For,

[3.] Hence customariness in all duties will quickly nsue, which is the height of sin's drawing off the nind from duty. For men's minds may be drawn rom all duties in the midst of the most abundant performance of them. For in and under them, the mind nay be subject unto an habitual diversion from its harge and watch unto the rule. What is done with uch a frame is not done to God, Amos v. 25. None f their sacrifices were to God, although they professed they were all so. But they attended not unto is worship in faith and unto his glory, and he despised ll their duties, Hos. x. 1. And this is the great eason why professors thrive so little under the performance of a multitude of duties. They attend not nto them in a due manner, their minds being drawn ff from their circumspect watch; and so they have ttle or no communion with God in them, which is ne end whereunto they are designed, and by which lone they become useful and profitable unto themelves. And in this manner are many duties of worship

and obedience performed by a woeful generation o hypocrites, formalists, and profane persons, withou either light or life in themselves or acceptation witl God; their minds being wholly estranged from a du attendance unto what they do, by the power an deceitfulness of sin.

(3.) As it is in respect of duties, so also it is i respect of sins. There are sundry things in and abou every sin, that the mind of a believer, by virtue of it office and duty, is obliged to attend diligently unto for the preservation of the soul from it. Things ther are which God hath appointed and sanctified, to giv effectual rebukes and checks to the whole working c the law of sin, and such as, in the law of grace unde which we are, are exceedingly suited and fitted unt that purpose. And, from a due consideration of an attendance unto these, the deceit of sin endeavours b all means to draw off the mind. Some few of ther we shall a little reflect upon.

[1.] The first and most general is, the sovereignt of God, the great Lawgiver, by whom sin is forbidder This Joseph fixed on in his great temptation; "ho can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Gen. xxxix. 9. There was in it a great evil, a grea ingratitude against man, which he pleads also an insists upon, ver. 8, 9; but that which fixed his hea and resolution against it, was the essential nature c it, that it was sin against God, by whom it wa severely forbidden. So the apostle informs us, th in our dealing with any thing that is against the lav our respect is still to be unto the lawgiver and h sovereignty; "If thou judge the law, thou art not doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgive who is able to save and to destroy," Jam. iv. 11, 1 Consider this always, there is one Lawgiver, hol

ighteous, armed with sovereign power and authority; ıe is able to save and destroy. Hence sin is called a ebellion, a casting off his yoke, a despising of him, nd that in his sovereignty, as the great Lawgiver: nd this ought the mind always practically to attend nto, in all the lustings, actings, and suggestions of he law of sin, especially when advantaged by any uitable or vigorous temptation. It is God that hath orbidden this thing, the great Lawgiver, under whose bsolute sovereignty I am, in dependence on whom I ive, and by whom I am to be disposed of as to my resent and eternal condition. This Eve fixed on at he beginning of her temptation; "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of this tree," Gen. iii. 3. But she ept not her ground, she abode not by that considera-ion, but suffered her mind to be diverted from it by he subtlety of Satan, which was the entrance of er transgression; and so it is unto us, in all our de-iations from obedience.

[2.] The desert of sin, of every sin, the punish-ıent appointed to it in the law, is another thing that he mind ought actually to attend unto, in reference o every particular evil. And the diversions from this ıat the minds of men have been doctrinally and prac-cally attended with, have been an inlet into all man-er of abominations. Job professeth another frame ı himself; "Destruction from God was a terror to ıe, and by reason of his highness I could not endure," ob xxxi. 23. Many evils he had mentioned in the regoing verses, and pleads his innocency from them, lthough they were such as upon account of his great-ess and power he could have committed easily, with-ut fear of danger from men. Here, he gives the eason that prevailed with him so carefully to abstain om them; "Destruction from God was a terror to

me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.' I considered, saith he, that God had appointed death and destruction for the punishment of sin, and tha such was his greatness, highness, and power, that he could inflict it unto the uttermost, in such a way as no creature is able to abide or to avoid. So the apostle directs believers always to consider what a "fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God;" and what because he hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense," Heb. x. 30, 31. He is a sin-avenging God, that will by no means acquit the guilty; as in the declaration of his gracious name, infinitely full of encouragement to poor sinners in Christ, he adds that in the close, that he "will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 7. It is that he may keep upon the minds of them whom he pardoneth a due sense of the punishment that is due from his vindictive justice unto every sin. And so the apostle would have us mind, that even our "God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29; that is, tha we should consider his holiness and vindictive justice appointing unto sin a meet recompence or reward. And men's breaking through this consideration he reckons as the height of the aggravation of their sins: They knew that it is the judgment of God, that they which commit such things were worthy of death, yet continued to do them, Rom. i. 32. Wha hope is there for such persons? There is, indeed, relief against this consideration for humbling believing souls in the blood of Christ; but this relief is not to take off the mind from it as it is appointed of God to be a restraint from sin. And both these considerations even the sovereignty of God, and the punishment of sin, are put together by our Saviour; "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill th

oul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy oth soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28.

[3.] The consideration of all the love and kindness f God, against whom every sin is committed, is anther thing that the mind ought diligently to attend nto. And this is a prevailing consideration, if rightly nd graciously managed in the soul. This Moses resseth on the people; "do you thus requite the ord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy ther that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, nd established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 6. Is this a equital for eternal love, and all the fruits of it? for e love and care of a Father, of a Redeemer, that we ave been made partakers of? And it is the same onsideration which the apostle manageth to this purose; "having therefore these promises, dearly beved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the esh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," Cor. vii. 1. The receiving of the promises ought be effectual, as to stir us up unto all holiness, so to ork and effect an abstinence from all sin. And hat promises are these? namely, that God will be a ther unto us, and will receive us, chap. vi. 17, 18, hich compriseth the whole of all the love of God wards us, here and to eternity. If there be any spitual ingenuousness in the soul, whilst the mind is tentive to this consideration there can be no prevailg attempt made upon it by the power of sin. Now ere are two parts of this consideration.

The first is, that which is general in it, that which common unto all believers. This is managed unto is purpose; "Behold, what manner of love the ather hath bestowed upon us, that we should be lled the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth s not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are

we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 1—3. Consider, saith he, the love of God, and the privileges that we enjoy by it; "behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Adoption is an especial fruit of it, and how great a privilege is this! Such love it is, and such are the fruits of it, that the world knoweth nothing of the blessed condition which we obtain and enjoy thereby; "the world knoweth us not." Nay, it is such love, and so unspeakably blessed and glorious are the effects of it, that we ourselves are not able to comprehend them. What use then ought we to make of this contemplation of the excellent, unspeakable love of God? Why, saith he, "every one that hath this hope purifieth himself." Every man who, being made partaker of this love, has thereupon a hope of the full enjoyment of the fruits of it of being made like to God in glory, purifieth himself that is, in an abstinence from all and every sin, as in the following words is at large declared.

It is to be considered, secondly, as to such peculiar mercies and fruits of love as every one's soul hath been made partaker of. There is no believer, but, besides the love and mercy which he hath in common with all his brethren, hath also in the lot of his inheritance some enclosures, some especial mercies, wherein he hath a single property. He hath some joy which no stranger intermeddleth withal, Prov. xiv. 10; particular applications of covenant love and mercy to his soul. Now these are all provisions laid in by God that they may be borne in mind against an hour of

emptation, that the consideration of them may pre-
erve the soul from the attempts of sin. Their neg-
ect is an high aggravation of our provocations. It is
harged as the great evil of Solomon, that he had
inned against special mercies, especial intimations of
ove; he sinned after God "had appeared to him
wice," 1 Kings xi. 9. God required that he should
ave borne in mind that especial favour, and have
nade it an argument against sin; but he neglected it,
nd is burdened with this sore rebuke. And indeed
ll especial mercies, all especial tokens and pledges of
ove, are utterly lost and mis-spent upon us, if they
re not improved unto this end. This, then, is an-
ther thing that it is the duty of the mind greatly to
ttend unto, and to oppose effectually unto every at-
empt that is made on the soul by the law of sin.

[4.] The considerations that arise from the blood
nd mediation of Christ, are of the same importance.
So the apostle declares; "for the love of Christ con-
traineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died
or all, then were all dead: and that he died for all,
hat they which live should not henceforth live unto
hemselves, but unto him which died for them, and
ose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. There is a constrain-
ng efficacy in this consideration; it is great, forcible,
ffectual, if duly attended unto. But I must not here
n particular insist on these things. Nor,

[5.] Shall I speak of the inhabitation of the
Spirit, the greatest privilege that we are made par-
akers of in this world. The due consideration how
e is grieved by sin, how his dwelling-place is defiled
hereby, how his comforts are forfeited, lost, despised
y it, might also be insisted on. But the instances
assed through are sufficient for our purpose. Now
erein lies the duty of the mind in reference to

particular sins and temptations. It is diligently and carefully to attend unto these things, to dwell constantly upon the consideration of them, to have them in a continual readiness to oppose unto all the lustings, actings, warrings, attempts, and rage of sin.

In reference hereunto doth sin, in an especial manner, put forth and act its deceit. It labours by all means to draw off the mind from its due attendance unto these things; to deprive the soul of this great preservative and antidote against its poison. It endeavours to cause the soul to satisfy itself with general undigested notions about sin, that it may have nothing in particular to betake itself unto in its own defence against its attempts and temptations. And the ways whereby it doth this may be also briefly considered.

[1.] It is from the deceit of sin that the mind is spiritually slothful, whereby it becomes negligent unto this duty. The principal discharge of its trust in this matter, is expressed by watching, which is the great caution that the Lord Jesus gave unto his disciples in reference to all their dangers from sin and Satan; "I say unto all, Watch," Mark xiii. 37. That is, use your utmost diligence and circumspection, that you be not surprised and entangled with temptations. It is called also consideration; "consider your ways," "consider your latter end;" the want whereof God complains of in his people, Deut. xxxii. 29. Now that which is contrary to these indispensable conditions of our preservation, is spiritual slothfulness, as the apostle declares; "and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful," Heb. vi. 11, 12. If we show not diligence, we are slothful, and in danger of coming short of inheriting the

promises. See what Peter says; "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, &c. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 5. 8—11. All this the mind is turned from, if once, by the deceit of sin, it be made slothful. Now this sloth consists in these things.

Inadvertency: it doth not set itself to consider and attend unto its special concernments. The apostle, persuading the Hebrews with all earnestness to attend diligently, to consider carefully, that they may not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, gives this reason of their danger, that they were "dull of hearing," Heb. v. 11; that is, they were slothful, and did not attend unto the things of their duty. A secret regardlessness is apt to creep upon the soul, and it doth not set itself to a diligent marking how things go with it, and what is continually incumbent on it.

An unwillingness to be stirred up unto its duty. "A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again," Prov. xix. 24. There is an unwillingness in sloth to take any notice of warnings, calls, excitations, or stirrings up by the word, Spirit, judgments, or any thing that God maketh use of to call the mind unto a due consideration of the condition of the soul. And this

is a perfect evidence that the mind is made slothful by the deceit of sin, when especial calls and warnings, whether in a suitable word, or a pressing judgment, cannot prevail with it to pull its hand out of its bosom; that is, to get about the special duties it is called unto.

Weak and ineffectual attempts to recover itself unto its duty. "As the door turneth itself upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed," Prov. xxvi. 14. In the turning of a door upon its hinges, there is some motion, but no progress. It removes up and down, but is still in the place and posture that it was. So it is with the spiritually slothful man on his bed, or in his security. He makes some motions or faint endeavours towards a discharge of his duty, but goes not on. Where he was one day, there he is the next; yea, there where he was one year, he is the next. His endeavours are faint, cold, and evanescent; he gets no ground by them, but is always beginning and never finishing his work.

Heartlessness upon the apprehensions of difficulties and discouragements. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets," Prov. xxii. 13. Every difficulty deters him from duty. He thinks it impossible for him to attain to that accuracy, exactness, and perfection which he is in this matter to press after, and therefore contents himself in his old coldness and negligence, rather than run the hazard of a universal circumspection. Now if the deceit of sin hath once drawn away the mind into this frame, it lays it open to every temptation and incursion of sin. The spouse in the Canticles seems to have been overtaken with this distemper, chap. v. 1—3; and this puts her on various excuses, why she cannot attend unto the call of Christ,

and apply herself unto her duty in walking with him.

[2.] It draws away the mind from its watch and duty in reference to sin, by surprisals. It falls in conjunction with some urgent temptation, and surpriseth the mind into thoughts quite of another nature than those which it ought to insist upon in its own defence. So it seems to have been with Peter; his carnal fear, closing with the temptation wherein Satan sought to winnow him, filled his mind with so many thoughts about his own imminent danger, that he could not take into consideration the love and warning of Christ, nor the evil whereunto this temptation led him, nor any thing that he ought to have insisted on for his preservation. And therefore, upon a review of his folly in neglecting those thoughts of God and the love of Christ which, through the assistance of the Holy Ghost, might have kept him from his scandalous fall, he "wept bitterly." And this, indeed, is the common way to the working of the deceit of sin as unto particular evils. It lays hold on the mind suddenly with thoughtfulness about the present sin, possesseth it, taketh it up, so that either it recovers not itself at all to the considerations mentioned, or, if any thoughts of them be suggested, the mind is so prepossessed and filled, that they take no impression on the soul, or make no abode in it. Thus, doubtless, was David surprised in the entrance of his great sin. Sin and temptation did so possess and fill his mind with the present object of his lust, that he utterly forgot, as it were, those considerations which he had formerly made use of when he so diligently kept himself from his iniquity. Here therefore lies the great wisdom of the soul, in rejecting the very first motions of sin; because, by parleys with them, the

mind may be drawn off from attending to its preservatives, and so the whole rush into evil.

[3.] It draws away the mind by frequency and long continuance of its solicitations, making as it were at last a conquest of it. And this happens not without an open neglect of the soul, in want of stirring up itself to give an effectual rebuke unto sin, in the strength and by the grace of Christ, which would have prevented its prevalency: but of this more shall be spoken afterwards. And this is the first way whereby the law of sin acts its deceit against the soul. It draws off the mind from attendance unto its charge and office, both in respect of duty and sin. And so far as this is done, the person is said to be drawn away or drawn off. He is tempted; "every man is tempted" when he is thus "drawn away by his own lust," or the deceit of sin dwelling in him. And the whole effect of this working of the deceitfulness of sin may be reduced unto these three heads: first, the remission of a universally watchful frame of spirit unto every duty, and against all even the most hidden and secret actings of sin: second, the omission of peculiar attendance to such duties as have an especial respect to the weakening and ruin of the whole law of sin, and the obviating of its deceitfulness: third, spiritual sloth as to a diligent regard unto all the especial concernments of duties and sins. When these three things, with their branches mentioned, are, less or more, brought about upon the soul, or so far as they are so, so far a man is drawn off by his own lust or the deceit of sin.

There is no need of adding here any directions for the prevention of this evil, these having sufficiently been laid down in our passage through the consideration both of the duty of the mind and of the deceit of sin.

CHAPTER XI.

The working of sin by deceit to entangle the affections. The ways whereby it is done. Means of their prevention.

II. THE second thing in the words of the apostle ascribed unto the deceitful working of sin is, its enticing: a man is "drawn away and enticed." And this seems particularly to respect the affections, as drawing away doth the mind. The mind is drawn away from duty, and the affections are enticed unto sin. From the prevalency hereof a man is said to be enticed or entangled as with a bait: so the word imports; for there is an allusion in it unto the bait wherewith a fish is taken on the hook, which holds him to his destruction. And concerning this effect of the deceit of sin, we shall briefly show two things: 1. What it is to be enticed or to be entangled with the bait of sin; to have the affections tainted with an inclination thereunto, and when they are so: 2. What course sin takes, and what way it proceedeth in, thus to entice, insnare, or entangle the soul.

1. Our first inquiry is, what it is to be enticed or entangled with the bait of sin. And here,

(1.) The affections are certainly entangled, when they stir up frequent imaginations about the proposed object, which this deceit of sin leadeth and enticeth towards. When sin prevails, and the affections are gone fully after it, it fills the imagination with it, possessing it with images, likenesses, appearances of it continually. Such persons devise iniquity and work evil on their beds; which they also practise when they are able, when it is "in the power of their hand,"

Micah ii. 1. As in particular, Peter tells us, that they have eyes full of an adulteress, and they cannot cease from sin, 2 Pet. ii. 14; that is, their imaginations are possessed with a continual representation of the object of their lusts. And it is so in part, where the affections are in part entangled with sin, and begin to turn aside unto it. John tells us that the things that are in the world are, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 Epist. ii. 16. The lust of the eyes is that which by them is conveyed into the soul. Now it is not the bodily sense of seeing that is intended, but the fixing of the imagination, by that sense, on such things. And this is called the eyes, because thereby things are constantly represented unto the mind and soul, as outward objects are unto the inward sense by the eyes. And oftentimes the outward sight of the eyes is the occasion of these imaginations. So Achan declares how sin prevailed with him: first he saw the wedge of gold and Babylonish garment, and then he coveted them, Josh. vii. 21. He rolled them, the pleasures, the profit of them, in his imagination, and then fixed his heart upon the obtaining of them. Now the heart may have a settled, fixed detestation of sin; but yet if a man find that the imagination of the mind is frequently solicited by it, and exercised about it, such a one may know that his affections are secretly enticed and entangled.

(2.) This entanglement is heightened, when the imagination can prevail with the mind to lodge vain thoughts in it, with secret delight and complacency. An abiding thought with delight towards forbidden objects, is in all cases actually sinful. And yet this may be when the consent of the will unto sin is not obtained; when the soul would not, for the world, do

the thing about which yet thoughts begin to lodge in the mind. This lodging of vain thoughts in the heart the prophet complains of, as a thing greatly sinful and to be abhorred, Jer. iv. 14. All these thoughts are messengers, that carry sin to and fro between the imagination and the affections, and still increase it, inflaming the imagination, and more and more entangling the affections. Achan thinks upon the golden wedge; this makes him like it and love it; by loving it his thoughts are infected, and return to the imagination of its worth and goodly show; and so, by little and little, the soul is inflamed unto sin. And here, if the will parts with its sovereignty, sin is actually conceived.

(3.) Inclinations or readiness to attend unto extenuations of sin, or the reliefs that are tendered against sin when committed, manifest the affections to be entangled with it. We have shown, and shall yet further evidence, that it is a great part of the deceit of sin to tender lessening and extenuating thoughts of sin to the mind. Is it not a little one? or, there is mercy provided; or, it shall be in due time relinquished and given over; is its language in a deceived heart. Now, when there is a readiness in the soul to hearken and give entertainment to such secret insinuations arising from this deceit, in reference unto any sin, or unapproved course, it is an evidence that the affections are enticed. When the soul is willing as it were to be tempted, to be courted by sin, to hearken to its dalliances and solicitations, it hath lost in part its conjugal affections unto Christ, and is entangled. This is looking on the wine when it is red, "when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright," Prov. xxiii. 31; a pleasing contemplation on the invitations of sin, whose end the wise man gives

us, ver. 32. When the deceit of sin hath prevailed thus far on any person, then he is enticed or entangled; the will is not yet come to the actual conception of this or that sin by its consent, but the whole soul is in a near inclination thereunto. And many other instances I could give as tokens and evidences of this entanglement. These may suffice to manifest what we intend thereby.

2. Our next inquiry is, how or by what means the deceit of sin proceeds thus to entice and entangle the affections; and two or three of its baits are manifest herein.

(1.) It makes use of its former prevalency upon the mind, in drawing it off from its watch and circumspection. Says the wise man, "surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird," Prov. i. 17; or, before the eyes of every thing that hath a wing, as in the original. If it hath eyes open to discern the snare, and a wing to carry it away, it will not be caught. And in vain should the deceit of sin spread its snares and nets for the entanglement of the soul, whilst the eyes of the mind are intent upon what it doth, and so stir up the wings of its will and affections to carry it away and avoid it. But if the eyes be put out or diverted, the wings are of very little use for escape. And therefore this is one of the ways which are used by them who take birds or fowls in their nets; they have false lights, or shows of things, to divert the sight of their prey; and when that is done, they take the season to cast their nets upon them. So doth the deceit of sin; it first draws off and diverts the mind by false reasonings and pretences, as hath been shown, and then casts its net upon the affections for their entanglement.

(2.) Taking advantage of such seasons, it proposeth

sin as desirable, as exceeding satisfactory to the corrupt part of our affections. It gilds over the object by a thousand pretences, which it presents unto corrupt lustings. This is the laying of a bait, which the apostle in this verse evidently alludes unto. A bait is something desirable and suitable that is proposed to the hungry creature for its satisfaction; and it is, by all artifices, rendered desirable and suitable. Thus is sin presented by the help of the imagination unto the soul that is sinful; and inordinate objects which the affections cleave unto, are so presented. The apostle tells us that there are "pleasures of sin," Heb. xi. 25; which, unless they are despised, as they were by Moses, there is no escaping of sin itself. Hence they that live in sin are said to "live in pleasure," Jam. v. 5. Now this pleasure of sin consists in its suitableness to give satisfaction to the flesh, to lust, to corrupt affections. Hence is that caution, "make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof," Rom. xiii. 14. That is, do not suffer your minds, thoughts, or affections, to fix upon sinful objects, suited to give satisfaction to the lusts of the flesh, to nourish and cherish them thereby. To which purpose he speaks again, "Fulfil ye not the lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 16. Bring not in the pleasures of sin, to give them satisfaction. When men are under the power of sin, they are said to "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind," Eph. ii. 3. Thus, therefore, the deceit of sin endeavours to entangle the affections by proposing unto them, through the assistance of the imagination, that suitableness which is in it to the satisfaction of its corrupt lusts, now set at some liberty by the inadvertency of the mind. It presents its wine as sparkling in the cup, the beauty of the adulteress, the riches of the world, unto sensual

and covetous persons, and somewhat in the like kind, in some degree, to believers themselves. When, therefore, I say, sin would entangle the soul, it prevails with the imagination to solicit the heart, by representing this false painted beauty or pretended satisfactoriness of sin; and then if Satan with any peculiar temptation fall in to its assistance, it oftentimes inflames all the affections, and puts the whole soul into disorder.

(3.) It hides the danger that attends sin; it covers it, as the hook is covered with the bait, or the net spread over with meat for the fowl to be taken. It is not, indeed, possible, that sin should utterly deprive the soul of the knowledge of the danger of it. It cannot dispossess it of its notion or persuasion that "the wages of sin is death," and that it is the judgment of God that they that commit sin are "worthy of death." But this it will do: it will so take up and possess the mind and affections with the baits and desirableness of sin, that it shall divert them from an actual and practical contemplation of the danger of it. What Satan did, in and by his first temptation, that sin doth ever since. At first Eve guards herself with calling to mind the danger of sin; if we eat or touch it, we shall die, Gen. iii. 3. But, so soon as Satan had filled her mind with the beauty and usefulness of the fruit to make one wise, how quickly does she lay aside her practical prevalent consideration of the danger of eating it, the curse due unto it; or else relieves herself with a vain hope and pretence that it should not be, because the serpent told her so. So was David beguiled in his great transgression by the deceit of sin; his lust being pleased and satisfied, the consideration of the guilt and danger of his transgression was taken away; and therefore he is said to have

"despised the Lord," 2 Sam. xii. 9, in that he considered not the evil that was in his heart, and the danger that attended it in the threatening or commination of the law. Now sin, when it presseth upon the soul to this purpose, will use a thousand wiles to hide from it the terror of the Lord, the end of transgressions, and especially of that peculiar folly which it solicits the mind unto. Hopes of pardon shall be used to hide it, and future repentance shall hide it, and present importunity of lust shall hide it; occasions and opportunities shall hide it, surprisals shall hide it, extenuation of sin shall hide it, balancing of duties against it shall hide it, fixing the imagination on present objects shall hide it, desperate resolutions to venture the uttermost for the enjoyment of lust in its pleasures and profits, shall hide it. A thousand wiles it hath which cannot be recounted.

(4.) Having prevailed thus far, gilding over the pleasures of sin, hiding its end and demerit, it proceeds to raise perverse reasonings in the mind, to fix it upon the sin proposed, that it may be conceived and brought forth, the affections being already prevailed upon; of which we shall speak under the next head of its progress.

Here we may stay a little, as formerly, to give some few directions for the obviating of this woeful work of the deceitfulness of sin. Would we not be enticed or entangled, would we not be disposed to the conception of sin, would we be turned out of the road and way which goes down to death? Let us take heed of our affections, which are of so great concernment in the whole course of our obedience, that they are commonly in the Scripture called by the name of the heart, as the principal thing which God requires in our walking before him. And this is not slightly

to be attended to. The wise man saith, "keep thy heart with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23; or, as in the original, above or before all keepings; before every watch, keep thy heart. You have many keepings that you watch unto; you watch to keep your lives, to keep your estates, to keep your reputations, to keep up your families; but, saith he, above all these keepings, prefer that, attend to that of the heart, of your affections, that they be not entangled with sin. There is no safety without it. Save all other things and lose the heart, and all is lost, lost unto all eternity. You will say then, what shall we do, or how shall we observe this duty?

[1.] Keep your affections, as to their object in general. This advice the apostle gives in this very case, Col. iii. His advice in the beginning of that chapter is to direct us unto the mortification of sin, which he expressly engages in. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," ver. 5. Prevent the working and deceit of sin, which wars in your members. To prepare us, to enable us hereunto, he gives us that great direction, "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," ver. 2. Fix your affections upon heavenly things; this will enable you to mortify sin. Fill them with the things that are above, let them be exercised with them, and so enjoy the chiefest place in them. They are above, blessed and suitable objects, meet for and answering unto our affections: God himself, in his beauty and glory; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "altogether lovely, the chiefest of ten thousand;" grace and glory; the mysteries revealed in the gospel, the blessedness promised thereby. Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things, as it is our duty that they should be, our hap-

piness when they are; what access could sin, with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits, have unto our souls? How should we loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, Get ye hence as an abominable thing! for what are the vain, transitory pleasures of sin in comparison of the exceeding recompence of reward which is proposed unto us? Which argument the apostle presses, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

[2.] As to the object of your affections, in an especial manner, let it be the cross of Christ, which hath an exceeding efficacy towards the disappointment of the whole work of indwelling sin. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. vi. 14. The cross of Christ the apostle gloried and rejoiced in; this his heart was set upon, and these were the effects of it; it crucified the world unto him, made it a dead and undesirable thing. The baits and pleasures of sin are taken, all of them, out of the world and the things that are in the world, namely, the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These are the things that are in the world; from these doth sin take all its baits whereby it enticeth and entangleth our souls. If the heart be filled with the cross of Christ, it casts death and undesirableness upon them all; it leaves no seeming beauty, no appearing pleasure or comeliness in them. Again, saith he, "It crucifieth me to the world, makes my heart, my affections, my desires, dead unto any of these things." It roots up corrupt lusts and affections, leaves no principle to go forth and make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Labour, therefore, to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ. Consider the sorrows he underwent, the curse

he bore, the blood he shed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your souls, and the mystery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileness, the demerit, and punishment of sin, as represented in the cross, the blood, the death of Christ. Is Christ crucified for sin, and shall not our hearts be crucified with him unto sin? Shall we give entertainment unto that, or hearken unto its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which slew our dear Lord Jesus? God forbid! Fill your affections with the cross of Christ, that there may be no room for sin. The world once put him out of a house into a stable when he came to save us; let him now turn the world out of doors, when he is come to sanctify us.

[3.] Look to the vigour of the affections towards heavenly things. If they are not constantly attended to, excited, directed, and warned, they are apt to decay, and sin lies in wait to take every advantage against them. Many complaints we have in the Scripture of those who lost their first love, in suffering their affections to decay. And this should make us jealous over our own hearts, lest we also should be overtaken with the same backsliding frame. Wherefore be jealous over them; often strictly examine them and call them to account, supply unto them due considerations for their exciting and stirring up unto duty.

CHAPTER XII.

The conception of sin through its deceit. Wherein it consisteth. The consent of the will unto sin. The nature thereof. Ways and means whereby it is obtained. Other advantages made use of by the deceit of sin. Ignorance, errors.

III. THE third success of the deceit of sin, in its progressive work, is the conception of actual sin. When it hath drawn the mind off from its duty and entangled the affections, it proceeds to conceive sin, in order to the bringing of it forth: "then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Now the conception of sin in order to its perpetration, can be nothing but the consent of the will; for, as without the consent of the will sin cannot be committed, so where the will hath consented unto it there is nothing in the soul to hinder its actual accomplishment. God doth, indeed, by various ways and means, frustrate the bringing forth of these guilty conceptions, causing them to melt away in the soul, or one way or other prove abortive, so that not the least part of that sin is committed which is willed or conceived: yet there is nothing in the soul itself that remains to give check unto it, when once the will hath given its consent. Oftentimes when a cloud is full of rain and ready to fall, a wind comes and drives it away. And when the will is ready to bring forth its sin, God diverts it by one wind or other; but yet the cloud was as full of rain as if it had fallen, and the soul as full of sin as if it had been committed.

This conceiving of lust or sin, then, is its prevalency in obtaining the consent of the will unto its

solicitations. And hereby the soul is despoiled of its fidelity towards God in Christ, as the apostle intimates, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. To clear up this matter we must observe,

1. That the will is the principle, the next seat and cause, of obedience and disobedience. Moral actions are unto us, or in us, so far good or evil as they partake of the consent of the will. He spake truth of old, who said, "every sin is so voluntary, that if it be not voluntary it is not sin." It is most true of actual sins. The essential nature of their iniquity ariseth from the acts of the will in them and concerning them; I mean, as to the persons that commit them; otherwise in itself, the essential reason of sin is its aberration from the law of God.

2. There is a two-fold consent of the will unto sin.

(1.) That which is full, absolute, complete, and upon deliberation; a prevailing consent, the convictions of the mind being conquered, and no principle of grace in the will to weaken it. With this consent, the soul goes into sin as a ship before the wind, with all its sails displayed, without any check or stop. It rusheth into sin like the horse into the battle; men thereby, as the apostle speaks, giving themselves over to sin with greediness, Eph. iv. 19. Thus Ahab's will was in the murdering of Naboth; he did it upon deliberation, by contrivance, with a full consent: the doing of it gave him such satisfaction as that it cured his malady, or the distemper of his mind. This is that consent of the will which is acted in the finishing and completing of sin in unregenerate persons, and is not required to the single bringing forth of sin, whereof we speak.

(2.) There is a consent of the will, which is attended with a secret resistance and volition of the

ontrary. Thus Peter's will was in the denying of is Master. His will was in it, or he had not done ; it was a voluntary action, that which he chose to o at that season; sin had not been brought forth if it ad not been thus conceived. But yet at this very me there was resident in his will a contrary principle f love to Christ, yea, and faith in him, which utterly iled not. The efficacy of it was intercepted, and its perations suspended actually, through the violent rging of the temptation that he was under; but yet was in his will, and weakened his consent unto sin, ough it consented. It was not done with self-easing, which such full acts of the will do produce.

3. Although there may be a predominant consent the will which may suffice for the conception of rticular sins, yet there cannot be an absolute, total, ll consent of the will of a believer unto any sin. or, first, there is in his will a principle fixed on ood, on all good; "he would do good," Rom. vii. 1. The principle of grace in the will inclines him all good. And this in general is prevalent against e principle of sin, so that the will is denominated om thence. Grace hath the rule and dominion, and t sin, in the will of every believer. Now that con-nt in the will unto sin which is contrary to the nerally prevailing principle and inclination in the me will, is not, cannot be, total, absolute, and com-ete. Secondly, there is not only a general, ruling, evailing principle in the will against sin, but there also a secret reluctancy in it unto its own act in con-nting unto sin. It is true the soul is not sensible metimes of this reluctancy, because the present con-nt carries away the prevailing act of the will, and kes away the sense of the lustings of the Spirit or uctancy of the principle of grace in the will. But

the general rule holdeth in all things, at all times "the Spirit lusteth against the flesh," Gal. v. 17 It doth so actually, though not always to the sam degree, nor with the same success: and the prevalenc of the contrary principle, in this or that particula act, doth not disprove it. It is so on the other side there is no acting of grace in the will but sin lust against: although that lusting be not made sensibl in the soul, because of the prevalency of the contrar acting of grace, yet it is enough to keep those acting from perfection in their kind. So is it in this resistance of grace against the acting of sin in the soul though it be not sensible in its operations, yet it i enough to keep that act from being full and complete And much of spiritual wisdom lies in discernin aright between the spiritual resistance of the principl of grace in the will against sin, and the rebukes tha are given the soul by conscience upon convictio for sin.

4. Observe that reiterated, repeated acts of th consent of the will unto sin, may beget a dispositio and inclinableness in it unto the like acts, that ma bring the will unto a proneness and readiness to con sent unto sin upon easy solicitations; which is a con dition dangerous to the soul, and greatly to be watch ed against.

5. This consent of the will which we have thu described, may be considered two ways; first, as it i exercised about the circumstances, causes, means, an inducements unto sin; secondly, as it respects this o that actual sin. In the first sense, there is a virtua consent of the will unto sin in every inadvertency unt the prevention of it, in every neglect of duty tha makes way for it, in every hearkening unto any tempt ation leading towards it; in a word, in all the diver

ons of the mind from its duty, and entanglements of e affections by sin, before mentioned. For where ere is no act of the will, formally or virtually, there no sin. But this is not that which we now speak , but in particular the consent of the will unto this that actual sin, so far that either sin is committed, is prevented by other ways and means not of our esent consideration. And herein consists the conviving of sin.

These things being supposed, that which, in the xt place, we are to consider, is the way that the deit of sin proceedeth in to procure the consent of the ll, and so to conceive actual sin in the soul.

To this purpose observe, that the will is a rational petite; rational as guided by the mind, and an aptite as excited by the affections: and so, in its erations or actings, it hath respect to both, is influced by both. Again, it chooseth nothing, it conts to nothing, but as it hath an appearance of good, me present good. It cannot consent to any thing der the notion or apprehension of its being evil, in y kind. Good is its natural and necessary object, d therefore whatever is proposed unto it for its conit must be proposed under an appearance of being her good in itself, or good at present unto the soul, good so circumstanced as it is. So that, further, may see hence the reason why the conception of is here placed as a consequent of the mind's being wn away and the affections being entangled. Both se have an influence unto the consent of the will, d the conception of this or that actual sin thereby. r way therefore here is made somewhat plain. We ve seen at large, how the mind is drawn away by deceit of sin, and how the affections are entangled. at which remains is but the proper effect of these

things; for the discovery whereof we must instance i some of these special deceits, corrupt and fallaciou reasonings, before mentioned; and then show the prevalency on the will to a consent unto sin.

1. The will is imposed upon by that corru reasoning, that grace is exalted in pardon, and th mercy is provided for sinners. This, as hath bee shown, first deceives the mind, and that opens the wa to the will's consent, by removing a sight of evil whic the will hath an aversation to. And this in carn hearts, prevails so far as to make them think th their liberty consists in being "servants of corruption 2 Pet. ii. 19. And the poison of it doth oftentim taint and vitiate the minds of believers themselve whence we are so cautioned against it in Scriptur To what therefore hath been spoken before unto th use and abuse of the doctrine of the grace of the go pel, we shall add some few other considerations, ar fix upon one place of Scripture that will give lig unto it. There is a two-fold mystery of grace; walking with God, and of coming unto God. Ar the great design of sin is to change the doctrine ar mystery of grace in reference unto these things; ar that by applying those considerations unto the o which are proper unto the other; whereby each pa is hindered, and the influence of the doctrine of gra unto them, for their furtherance, defeated. "The things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if ar man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jes Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation f our sins," 1 John ii. 1, 2. Here is the whole desi and use of the gospel briefly expressed; "the things," saith he, "I write unto you." What thin were these? Those mentioned chap. i. ver. 2. "T life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear w

ıess, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with he Father, and was manifested unto us;" that is, the hings concerning the person and mediation of Christ And, ver. 7, that pardon, forgiveness, and expiation rom sin, is to be attained by the blood of Christ. But o what end and purpose doth he write these things to hem? What do they teach, what do they tend unto? A universal abstinence from sin; "I write unto you," aith he, "that ye sin not." This is the proper, only, enuine end of the doctrine of the gospel. But to bstain from all sin is not our condition in this world. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, nd the truth is not in us," 1 John i. 8. What then hall be done in this case? In supposition of sin, that e have sinned, is there no relief provided for our ouls and consciences in the gospel? Yes, saith he, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is a propiiation for our sins." There is full relief in the propitiation and intercession of Christ for us. This is he order and method of the doctrine of the gospel, and f the application of it to our own souls; first, to keep s from sin, and then to relieve us against sin. But ere entereth the deceit of sin, and puts this "new vine into old bottles," whereby the bottles are broken, nd the wine perisheth, as to our benefit by it. It hangeth this method and order of the application of ospel truths. It takes up the last first, and that excludes the use of the first utterly. If any man sin here is pardon provided, is all the gospel that sin ould willingly suffer to abide on the minds of men. When we would come to God by believing, it would e pressing the former part, of being free from sin, hile the gospel proposeth the latter principally, or e pardon of sin, for our encouragement. When we

are come to God, and should walk with him, it wil have only the latter proposed, that there is pardon o sin, while the gospel principally proposeth the former of keeping ourselves from sin; the grace of God bringing salvation, having appeared unto us to tha end and purpose. Now the mind being entangle with this deceit, drawn off from its watch by it, di verted from the true ends of the gospel, doth severa ways impose upon the will, to obtain its consent.

(1.) By a sudden surprisal in case of temptation Temptation is the representation of a thing as a pre sent good, a particular good, which is a real evil, general evil Now when a temptation, armed wit opportunity and provocation, befalls the soul, th principle of grace in the will riseth up with a rejectio and detestation of it. But on a sudden the mind being deceived by sin, breaks in upon the will with corrupt, fallacious reasoning from gospel grace an mercy, which first staggers, then abates the will's op position, and then, presenting evil as a present good causeth it to cast the scale by its consent on the side o temptation; and sin, in the sight of God, is conceived though it be never committed. Thus is the seed o God sacrificed to Moloch, and the weapons of Chris abused to the service of the devil.

(2.) It doth it insensibly. It insinuates the poiso of this corrupt reasoning by little and little, until hath greatly prevailed. And as the whole effect o the doctrine of the gospel, in holiness and obedienc consists in the soul's being cast into the frame an mould of it, so the whole of apostasy from the gosp is principally the casting of the soul into the mould o this false reasoning, that indulgence may be give unto sin upon account of grace and pardon. Hereb is the soul gratified in sloth and negligence, and take

ff from its care as to particular duties, and avoidnce of particular sins. It works the soul insensibly ff from the mystery of the law of grace; which is to ook for salvation as if we had never performed any uty, with a resting on sovereign mercy through the lood of Christ, being, after we have done all, unprofitble servants; and to attend unto duties with all dilience as if we looked for no mercy, that is, with no ess care, though with more liberty and freedom This ne deceitfulness of sin endeavoureth by all means to ork the soul from, and thereby debaucheth the will hen its consent is required unto particular sins.

2. The deceived mind imposeth on the will to obin its consent unto sin, by proposing unto it the adantages that may accrue and arise thereby, which is ne medium whereby itself also is drawn away. It enders that which is absolutely evil a present appearg good. So was it with Eve, Gen. iii. Laying side all considerations of the law, covenant, and threats f God, she all at once reflects upon the advantages, leasures, and benefits which she should obtain by her n, and reckons them up to solicit the consent of her ill. "It is," saith she, "good for food, pleasant to ne eyes, and to be desired to make one wise." What ould she do then but eat it? Her will consented, nd she did so accordingly. Pleas for obedience are id out of the way, and only the pleasures of sin are ken under consideration. So saith Ahab; Naboth's neyard is near my house, and I may make it a garen of herbs, therefore I must have it, 1 Kings xxi. hese considerations a deceived mind imposed on his ill, until it made him obstinate in the pursuit of his vetousness, through perjury and murder, to the utter in of himself and his family. Thus is the guilt nd tendency of sin hid under the covert of advantages

and pleasures, and so is conceived or resolved on in the soul.

3. As the mind being withdrawn, so the affections, being enticed and entangled, do greatly further the conception of sin in the soul by the consent of the will; and they do it in two ways.

(1.) By some hasty impulse and surprisal. Being themselves stirred up, incited, and drawn forth by some violent provocation or suitable temptation, they put the whole soul, as it were, into a combustion, and draw the will into a consent to what they are provoked unto and entangled withal. So was the case of David in the matter of Nabal. A violent provocation, from the extreme unworthy carriage of that foolish churl, stirs him up to wrath and revenge; he resolves upon it to destroy a whole family, the innocent with the guilty, 1 Sam. xxv. 13, 34, 35. Self-revenge and murder were, for the season, conceived, resolved, consented to, until God graciously took him off. His entangled, provoked affections, surprised his will to consent to the conception of many bloody sins. The case was the same with Asa in his anger, when he smote the prophet; and with Peter in his fear, when he denied his Master. Let that soul which would take heed of conceiving sin, take heed of entangled affections; for sin may be suddenly conceived; the prevalent consent of the will may be suddenly obtained which gives the soul a fixed guilt, though the sin itself be never actually brought forth.

(2.) Enticed affections procure the consent of the will by frequent solicitations, whereby they get ground insensibly upon it, and enthrone themselves. Take an instance in the sons of Jacob, Gen. xxxvii. 4. They hate their brother, because their father loved him. Their affections being enticed, many new od

casions fall out to entangle them further, as his dreams and the like. This lay rankling in their hearts, and never ceased soliciting their wills, until they resolved upon his death. The unlawfulness, the unnaturalness of the action, the grief of their aged father, the guilt of their own souls, are all laid aside: that hatred and envy they had conceived against him ceased not, until they had got the consent of their wills to his ruin. This gradual progress of the prevalency of corrupt affections to solicit the soul unto sin, the wise man excellently describes, Prov. xxiii. 31—35. And this is the common way of sin's procedure in the destruction of souls which seem to have some good engagements in the ways of God. When it hath entangled them with one temptation, and brought the will to some liking of it, that presently becomes another temptation, either to the neglect of some duty, or to the refusal of more light; and commonly, that whereby men fall off utterly from God is not that wherewith they are first entangled. And this may briefly suffice for the third progressive act of the deceit of sin. It obtains the will's consent unto its conception; and by this means are multitudes of sins conceived in the heart, which very little less defile the soul, or cause it to contract very little less guilt, than if they were actually committed.

Unto what hath been spoken concerning the deceitfulness of indwelling sin in general, which greatly evidenceth its power and efficacy, I shall add, as a close of this discourse, one or two particular ways of its deceitful actings, consisting in advantages that it maketh use of, and means of relieving itself against that inquisition which is made after it by the word and Spirit for its ruin. One head only of each sort we shall here name.

1. It makes great advantage of the darkness of the mind to work out its design and intendments. The shades of a mind totally dark, that is, utterly devoid of saving grace, are the proper working-place of sin. Hence the effects of it are called "the works of darkness," as springing from thence, Eph. v. 11; Rom. xiii. 12. Sin works and brings forth by the help of it. The working of lust under the covert of a dark mind, is as it were the upper region of hell; for it lies at the next door to it, for filth, horror, and confusion. Now there is a partial darkness abiding still in believers; they "know but in part," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though there be in them all a principle of saving light, the day-star being risen in their hearts, yet all the shades of darkness are not utterly expelled out of them in this life. And there are two parts, as it were, or principal effects, of the remaining darkness that is in believers: ignorance, or a nescience of the will of God, either of the rule and law in general, or of the reference of the particular fact that lies before the mind unto the law: error and mistakes, positively taking that for truth which is falsehood, and that for light which is darkness. Now of both these doth the law of sin make great advantage for the exerting of its power in the soul.

(1.) Is there a remaining ignorance of any thing of the will of God? sin will be sure to make use of it and improve it to the uttermost. Though Abimelech were not a believer, yet he was a person that had a moral integrity with him in his ways and actions; he declares himself to have had this, in a solemn appeal to God the searcher of all hearts, even in that wherein he miscarried, Gen. xx. 5. But being ignorant that fornication was a sin, or so great a sin as that it became not a morally honest man to defile himself wit

it, lust hurries him into that intention of evil, in reference to Sarah, as we have it there related. God complains that his people perished "for lack of knowledge," Hos. iv. 6. Being ignorant of the mind and will of God, they rushed into evil at every command of the law of sin. Be it as to any duty to be performed, or as to any sin to be committed, if there be darkness or ignorance of the mind about them, sin will not lose its advantage. Many a man being ignorant of the duty incumbent upon him for the instruction of his family, casting the whole weight of it upon the public teaching, is by the deceitfulness of sin brought into an habitual sloth and negligence of duty. So much ignorance of the will of God and duty, so much advantage is given to the law of sin. And hence we may see what is that true knowledge which with God is acceptable. How exactly doth many a poor soul, who is low as to notional knowledge, yet walk with God! It seems they know so much as that sin hath not, on that account, much advantage against them; while others, high in their notions, give advantage to their lusts even by their ignorance, though they know it not.

(2.) Error is a worse part or effect of the mind's darkness, and gives great advantage to the law of sin. There is, indeed, ignorance in every error, but there is not error in all ignorance, and so they may be distinguished. I shall need to exemplify this but with one consideration, and that is, of men who, being zealous for some error, do seek to suppress and persecute the truth. Indwelling sin desires no greater advantage. How will it every day, every hour, pour forth wrath, revilings, hard speeches; breathe revenge, murder, desolation, under the name perhaps of zeal. On this account we may see poor creatures pleasing

themselves every day, as if they vaunted in their excellency, when they are foaming out their own shame. Under their real darkness and pretended zeal, sin sits securely, and fills pulpits, houses, prayers, streets, with the bitter fruits of envy, malice, wrath, hatred, evil surmises, false speaking, as full as they can hold. The common issue with such poor creatures is, that the holy, blessed, meek Spirit of God withdraws from them, and leaves them visibly and openly to that evil, froward, wrathful, worldly spirit, which the law of sin hath cherished and heightened in them. Sin dwells not any where more secure than in such a frame. Thus, I say, it lays hold in particular of advantages to practise upon with its deceitfulness, and therein also to exert its power in the soul; whereof this single instance of its improving the darkness of the mind unto its own ends, is a sufficient evidence.

2. It useth means of relieving itself against the pursuit that is made after it in the heart by the word and Spirit of grace. One also of its wiles, in the way of instance, I shall name in this kind, and that is the alleviation of its own guilt. It pleads for itself, that it is not so bad, so filthy, so fatal, as is pretended; and this course of extenuation proceeds in two ways. (1.) Absolutely; many secret pleas it will have, that the evil which it tends unto is not so pernicious as conscience is persuaded that it is; it may be ventured on without ruin. These considerations it will strongly urge when it is at work in a way of surprisal, when the soul hath no leisure or liberty to weigh its suggestions in the balance of the sanctuary; and not seldom is the will imposed on hereby, and advantages gotten to shift itself from under the sword of the Spirit. It is not such but that it may be let alone, or suffered to die of itself, which probably, within a while, it may

lo: no need of that violence which in mortification is o be offered: it is time enough to deal with a matter of no greater importance hereafter; with other pleas ike those before mentioned. (2.) Comparatively; nd this is a large field for its deceit and subtlety to urk in. Though it is an evil to be indeed relinquished, and the soul is to be made watchful against t, yet it is not of that magnitude and degree which ve may see in the lives of others, even saints of God; nuch less such as some saints of old have been fallen nto. By these and the like pretences, I say, it seeks o evade and keep its abode in the soul, when pursued o destruction. And how little a portion of its leceitfulness is it that we have declared!

CHAPTER XIII.

Several ways whereby the bringing forth of conceived sin is obstructed.

BEFORE we proceed to the remaining evidence of the ower and efficacy of the law of sin, we shall take ccasion, from what hath been delivered, to divert nto one consideration that offers itself from that Scripure, James i. 14, which was made the bottom and oundation of our discourse on the general deceitfulness of sin. The apostle tells us, that "lust conceiving brings forth sin;" seeming to intimate that, whatver sin is conceived, that also is brought forth. Now lacing the conception of sin, as we have done, in the onsent of the will unto it, and reckoning, as we ought, he bringing forth of sin to consist in its actual commission, we know that these do not necessarily follow ne another. There is a world of sin conceived in

the womb of the wills and hearts of men, that is never brought forth. Our present business, then, shall be to inquire, whence that comes to pass? I answer then,

That this is not so, is no thanks to sin nor the law of it. What it conceives it would bring forth, and that it doth not, is for the most part but a small abatement of its guilt. A determinate will of actual sinning, is actual sin. There is nothing wanting on sin's part that every conceived sin is not actually accomplished. The obstacle and prevention lies on another hand.

There are two things that are necessary in the creature that hath conceived sin, for the bringing of it forth: first, power; secondly, continuance in the will of sinning until it be perpetrated and committed. Where these two are, actual sin will unavoidably ensue. It is evident, therefore, that that which hinders conceived sin from being brought forth, must affect either the power or the will of the sinner. This must be from God. And he hath two ways of doing it: I. By his providence, whereby he obstructs the power of sinning: II. By his grace, whereby he diverts or changes the will of sinning. I do not mention these ways of God's dispensations thus distinctly, as though the one of them were always without the other, for there is much of grace in providential administrations, and much of the wisdom of providence seen in the dispensations of grace. But I place them in this distinction because they appear most eminent therein: providence, in outward acts, respecting the power of the creature; grace, common or special, in internal efficacy, respecting his will. And we shall begin with the first.

I. When sin is conceived, the Lord obstructs its production by his providence, in taking away or taking

short that power which is absolutely necessary for its bringing forth or accomplishment. As,

1. Life is the foundation of all power, the principle of operation. When that ceaseth, all power ceaseth with it. Even God himself, to evince the everlasting stability of his own power, gives himself the title of the Living God. Now he frequently obviates the power of exerting sin actually, by cutting short, and taking away, the lives of them that have conceived it. Thus he dealt with the army of Sennacherib, when, according as he had purposed, so he threatened, that the Lord should not deliver Jerusalem out of his hand, 2 Kings xviii. 35. God threatens to cut short his power, that he should not execute his intendment, which he performs accordingly by taking away the lives of his soldiers, without whom it was impossible that his conceived sin should be brought forth, chap. xix. 28. 35. This providential dispensation in the obstruction of conceived sin, Moses excellently sets forth in the case of Pharaoh; "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty water," Exod. xv. 9, 10. Sin's conception is here fully expressed, and as full a prevention is annexed unto it. In like manner he dealt with the companies of fifties and their captains, who came to apprehend Elijah, 2 Kings i. 10—12. Fire came down from heaven and consumed them, when they were ready to have taken him. And sundry other instances of the like nature might be recorded. That which is of universal concernment we have in that great providential alteration, which put a period to the lives of

men. Men living hundreds of years, had a long season to bring forth the sins they had conceived; thereupon the earth was filled with violence, injustice, and rapine, and all flesh corrupted their ways, Gen. vi. 12, 13. To prevent the like inundation of sin, God shortens the course of the pilgrimage of men in the earth, and reduces their lives to a much shorter measure. Besides this general law, God daily thus cuts off persons who had conceived much mischief and violence in their hearts, and prevents the execution of it. "Blood-thirsty and deceitful men do not live out half their days." They have yet much work to do, might they have but space given them to execute the bloody and sinful purposes of their minds. The psalmist tells us, "in the day that the breath of man goeth forth, his thoughts perish," Psa. cxlvi. 4: he had many contrivances about sin, but now they are all cut off. So also the wise man; "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God," Eccl. viii. 12, 13. How long soever a wicked man lives, yet he dies judicially and shall not abide to do the evil he had conceived.

But now, seeing we have granted that even believers themselves may conceive sin through the power and deceitfulness of it, it may be inquired whether God ever thus obviates its production and accomplishment in them, by cutting off and taking away their lives, so as that they shall not be able to perform it. I answer,

(1.) That God doth not judicially cut off and take away the life of any of his, for this end and purpose

that he may thereby prevent the execution or bringing forth of any particular sin that he had conceived, and which without that taking away he would have perpetrated. For,

[1.] This is directly contrary to the very declared end of the patience of God towards them, 2 Pet. iii. 9. This is the very end of the long-suffering of God towards believers, that before they depart hence they may come to the sense, acknowledgment, and repentance of every known sin. This is the constant and unchangeable rule of God's patience in the covenant of grace, which is so far from being in them an encouragement unto sin, that it is a motive to universal watchfulness against it, of the same nature with all gospel grace, and mercy in the blood of Christ. Now this dispensation whereof we speak, would lie in a direct contradiction unto it.

[2.] This also flows from the former, that whereas conceived sin contains the whole nature of it, as our Saviour at large declares, Matt. v.; and to be cut off under the guilt of it, to prevent its farther progress, argues a continuance in the purpose of it without repentance; it cannot be but they must perish for ever who are so judicially cut off. But God deals not so with his; he casts not off the people whom he did foreknow; and thence David prays for the patience of God before mentioned, that it might not be so with him, "O spare me that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more," Psa. xxxix. 13. But yet,

(2.) There are some cases wherein God may and doth take away the lives of his own, to prevent the guilt that otherwise they would be involved in; as,

[1.] In the coming of some great temptation and trial upon the world. God knowing that such and

such of his would not be able to withstand it and hold out against it, but would dishonour him and defile themselves, he may, and doubtless often doth, take them out of the world, to take them out of the way of it; "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come," Isa. lvii. 1. Not only the evil of punishment, but the evil of temptations and trials, which oftentimes prove much the worse of the two. Thus a captain in war will call off a soldier from his watch and guard, when he knows he is not able, through some infirmity, to bear the stress and force of the enemy that is coming upon him.

[2.] In case of their engagement in any way not acceptable to him, through ignorance or not knowing his mind and will. This seems to have been the case of Josiah. And doubtless the Lord doth oftentimes thus proceed with his. When any of his own are engaged in ways which please him not, through the darkness and ignorance of their minds, that they may not proceed to further evil or mischief he calls them off from their station and employment, and calls them to himself, where they shall err and mistake no more. But in ordinary cases, God hath other ways of diverting his own from sin than by killing of them, as we shall see afterwards.

2. God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by taking away and cutting short the power of them that had conceived it, so that though their lives continue, they shall not have that power without which it is impossible for them to execute what they had intended, or to bring forth what they had conceived. Hereof also we have sundry instances. This was the case with the builders of Babel: whatever it was in particular that they aimed at, it was in pursuit of a design of apostasy from God. One thing

requisite to the accomplishment of what they aimed at was the oneness of their language: so God says; "they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do," Gen. xi. 6. In an ordinary way they will accomplish their wicked design. What course doth God now take to obviate their conceived sin? Doth he bring a flood upon them to destroy them, as in the whole world some time before? Doth he send his angel to cut them off, like the army of Sennacherib afterwards? Doth he by any means take away their lives? No, their lives are continued, but he confounds their language, so that they cannot go on with their work; he takes away that wherein their power consisted. In like manner he did proceed with the sodomites. They were engaged in, and set upon, the pursuit of their filthy lusts. God smites them with blindness, so that they could not find the door where they thought to have used violence for the compassing of their ends, Gen. xix. 11. Their lives were continued and their will of sinning, but their power is cut short and abridged. His dealing with Jeroboam was of the same nature. He stretched out his hand to lay hold of the prophet, and it withered and became useless, 1 Kings xiii. 4. And this is an eminent way of the effectual actings of God's providence in the world, for the stopping of that inundation of sin, which would overflow all the earth were every womb of it opened. He cuts men short of their moral power whereby they should effect it. Many a wretch that hath conceived mischief against the church of God, hath by this means been divested of his power whereby he thought to accomplish it. Some have their bodies smitten with diseases, so that they can no more serve their lusts, nor accompany them in the

perpetrating of folly. Some are deprived of the instruments whereby they would work. There hath been, for many days, sin and mischief enough conceived to root out the generation of the righteous from the face of the earth, had men strength and ability to their will, did not God cut off and shorten their power and the days of their prevalency. "They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep," Psa. lxiv. 6. All things are in a readiness, the design is well laid, their counsels are deep and secret. What now shall hinder them from doing whatever they have imagined to do? "But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves," ver. 7, 8. God meets with them, brings them down, that they shall not be able to accomplish their design. And this way of God's preventing sin, seems to be at least ordinarily peculiar to the men of the world: God deals thus with them every day, and leaves them to pine away in their sins. They go all their days big with the iniquity they have conceived, and are greatly burthened that they cannot be delivered of it. The prophet tells us, that "they practise iniquity that they had devised, because it is in the power of their hand," Mic. ii. 1. If they have power for it, they will accomplish it; "to their power they shed blood," Ezek. xxii. 6. This is the measure of their sinning, even their power. They do, many of them no more evil, they commit no more sin, than they can. Their whole restraint lies in being cut short in power in one kind or another. Their bodies will not serve them for their contrived uncleanness, nor their hands for their revenge and rapine, nor their instruments for persecution; but they go, burthened with conceived

sin, and are disquieted and tortured by it all their days. And hence they become in themselves, as well as unto others, a "troubled sea that cannot rest," Isa. lvii. 20.

It may be also, that in some cases, under some violent temptations or in mistakes, God may thus obviate the accomplishment of conceived sin in his own. And there seems to be an instance of it in his dealing with Jehoshaphat, who had designed, against the mind of God, to join in affinity with Ahab, and to send his ships with him to Tarshish; but God breaks his ships by a wind, that he could not accomplish what he had designed. But in God's dealings with his in this way, there is a difference from the same dispensation towards others: for,

(1.) It is so only in cases of extraordinary temptation. When, through the violence of temptation and craft of Satan, They are hurried from under the conduct of the law of grace, God, one way or other, takes away their power, or may do so, that they shall not be able to execute what they have designed. But this is an ordinary way of dealing with wicked men. This hook of God is upon them in the whole course of their lives, and they struggle with it, being "as a wild bull in a net," Isa. li. 20. God's net is upon them, and they are filled with fury, but they cannot do all the wickedness that they would.

(2.) God doth it, not to leave them to wrestle with sin, and to attempt other ways of its accomplishment upon the failure of that which they were engaged in; but by their disappointment awakens them to consider their condition, and what they were doing; and so consumes sin in the womb, by ways that shall afterwards be insisted on. Some men's deprivation of power for the committing of conceived, contrived sin,

hath been sanctified to the changing of their hearts from all dalliances with that or other sins.

3. God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by opposing an external hindering power unto sinners. He leaves them their lives, and leaves them power to do what they intend, only he raiseth up an opposite power to coerce, forbid, and restrain them. An instance whereof is this. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should be put to death, and, as far as appears, went on resolutely to have slain him: God stirs up the spirit of the people; they oppose themselves to the wrath and fury of Saul, and Jonathan then is delivered; 1 Sam. xiv. 45. So also, when king Uzziah would have in his own person offered incense contrary to the law, eighty men of the priests resisted him and drove him out of the temple; 2 Chron. xxvi. 17—19. And to this head are to be referred all the assistances which God stirreth up for the deliverance of his people against the fury of persecutors. He raiseth up saviours or deliverers on mount Sion, to judge the mount of Edom. So when the dragon, and those acting under him, spirited by him, were in a furious endeavour for the destruction of the church, Rev. xii. 16, God stirs up the earth to her assistance; even men of the world not engaged with others in the design of Satan, and by their opposition hinders them from the execution of their designed rage. Of this nature seems to be that dealing of God with his own people, spoken of by the prophet, Hos. ii. 6, 7. They were in the pursuit of their iniquities, following after their lovers. God leaves them for a time to act in the folly of their spirits, but he sets a hedge and a wall before them, that they shall not be able to fulfil their design and lusts.

4. God obviates the accomplishment of conceived in, by removing or taking away the objects on whom or about whom, the sin conceived is to be committed. Acts xii. 6—11, yields us a signal instance of this ssue of providence. When the day was coming wherein Herod thought to have slain Peter, who was shut up in prison, God sends and takes him away from their rage and lying in wait. So also was our Saviour himself taken away from the murderous rage of he Jews before his hour was come, John viii. 59; x. 39. Both primitive and latter times are full of stories o this purpose: prison-doors have been opened, and poor creatures appointed to die have been frequently rescued from the jaws of death. In the world itself, mongst the men thereof, adulterers and adulteresses, he sin of the one is often hindered and stifled by the aking away of the other. So wings were given to he woman to carry her into the wilderness, and to disappoint the world in the execution of their rage, Rev. xii. 14.

5. God doth this by some eminent diversions of he thoughts of men who had conceived sin. The brethren of Joseph cast him into a pit with an intent o famish him there, Gen. xxxvii. 24. Whilst they were, as it seems, pleasing themselves with what they had done, God orders a company of merchants to come by, and diverts their thoughts, with that new object, from the killing to the selling of their brother, ver. 26, 27. And how far therein they were subservient to the infinitely wise counsel of God, we know. Thus also, when Saul was in pursuit of David, and was even ready to prevail against him to his destruction, God stirs up the philistines to invade the land, which both diverted his thoughts, and drew the course of his actings another way, 1 Sam. xxiii. 27.

And these are some of the ways whereby God is pleased to hinder the bringing forth of conceived sin by opposing himself and his providence to the power of the sinning creature. And we may a little, in our passage, take a brief view of the great advantages to faith and the church of God which may be found in this matter. As,

[1.] This may give us a little insight into the ever to be adored providence of God, obstructing, by these and the like ways in great variety, the breaking forth of sin in the world. It is he who makes those dams, and shuts up those flood-gates of corrupted nature, that it shall not break forth in a deluge of filthy abominations, to overwhelm the creation with confusion and disorder. As it was of old, so it is at this day "every thought and imagination of the heart of man is evil, and that continually." That all the earth is not, in all places, filled with violence as it was of old, is merely from the mighty hand of God, working effectually for the obstructing of sin. From hence alone it is, that the highways, streets, and fields, are not all filled with violence, blood, rapine, uncleanness, and every villany that the heart of man can conceive. Oh the infinite beauty of divine wisdom and providence in the government of the world; for the conservation of it asks daily no less power and wisdom than the first making of it did require.

[2.] If we will look to our own concernments, they will in a special manner enforce us to adore the wisdom and efficacy of the providence of God in stopping the progress of conceived sin. That we are at peace in our houses, at rest in our beds, that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is from hence alone. Whose person would not be defiled, or destroyed? whose habitation would not be ruined? whose blood

most would not be shed, if wicked men had power perpetrate all their conceived sin? It may be, the in of some of us hath been conceived a thousand nes. We are beholden to this providence of obructing sin, for our lives, our families, our estates, ir liberties, for whatsoever is or may be dear unto s. For, may we not say sometimes with the psalmt, "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among em that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose eth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp word," Psa. lvii. 4. And how is the deliverance of en from such persons contrived? God breaks their eth in their mouths, even the great teeth of the ung lions, Psa. lviii. 6. He keeps this fire from burng, or quencheth it when it is ready to break out into flame. He breaks their spears and arrows, so that metimes we are not so much as wounded by them; me he cuts off and destroys, some he cuts short in eir power, some he deprives of the instruments where alone they can work, some he prevents of their desired portunities, or diverts by other objects for their lusts, d oftentimes causeth them to spend them among emselves, one upon another. We may say therere, with the psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are y works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the rth is full of thy riches!" Psa. civ. 24. And with e prophet, "Who is wise, and he shall understand ese things? prudent, and he shall know them? for e ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall alk in them: but the transgressors shall fall there," Hos. xiv. 9.

[3.] If these and the like are the ways whereby od obviates the bringing forth of conceived sin in cked men, we may learn hence how miserable their ndition is, and in what perpetual torment, for the

most part, they spend their days: they are like a "troubled sea," saith the Lord, "that cannot rest." As they endeavour that others may have no peace, so it is certain that themselves have not any: the principle of sin is not impaired nor weakened in them the will of sinning is not taken away: they have a womb of sin, that is able to conceive monsters every moment. Yea, for the most part, they are forging and framing folly all the day long: one lust or other they are contriving how to satisfy: they are either devouring by malice and revenge, or vitiating by uncleanness, or trampling on by ambition, or swallowing down by covetousness, all that stand before them. Many of their follies and mischiefs they bring to the very birth, and are in pain to be delivered; but God every day fills them with disappointment, and shuts up the womb of sin. Some are filled with hatred of God's people all their days, and never once have an opportunity to exercise it. So David describes them: "They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth; swords are in their lips," Psa. lix. 6, 7. And yet they are not able to accomplish their designs: what torture do such poor creatures live in! Envy, malice, wrath, revenge, devour their hearts by not getting vent. And when God hath exercised the other acts of his wise providence in cutting short their power, or opposing a greater power to them, when nothing else will do he cuts them off in their sins, and to the grave they go full of purposes of iniquity. Others are no less hurried and diverted by the power of other lusts which they are not able to satisfy; this is the sore travail they are exercised with all their days. If they accomplish their designs, they are more wicked and hellish than before; and if they

o not, they are filled with vexation and discontent-
ent. This is the portion of them who know not
e Lord, nor the power of his grace. Envy not
eir condition, notwithstanding their outward glitter-
g show: their hearts are full of anxiety, trouble, and
rrow.

[4.] Do we see sometimes the flood-gates of men's
sts and rage set open against the church and inter-
t of it, and doth prevalency attend them, and power
for a season on their side? Let not the saints of
od despond. He hath unspeakably various and
fectual ways for the stifling of their conceptions, to
ve them dry breasts, and a miscarrying womb. He
n stop their fury when he pleaseth. "Surely,"
ith the psalmist, "the wrath of man shall praise
ee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain,"
sa. lxxvi. 10. When so much of their wrath is let
t as shall exalt his praise, he can, when he pleaseth,
t up a power greater than the combined strength of
l sinning creatures, and restrain the remainder of the
rath that they had conceived. "He shall cut off the
irit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the
rth," Psa. lxxvi. 12. Some he will cut off and
stroy, some he will terrify and affright, and prevent
e rage of all. He can knock them on the head, or
eak out their teeth, or chain up their wrath, and
ho can oppose him?

[5.] Those who have received benefit by any of
e ways mentioned, may know to whom they owe
eir preservation, and not look on it as a common
ing. When you have conceived sin, hath God
eakened your power from sin, or denied you oppor-
nity, or taken away the object of your lusts, or di-
rted your thoughts by new providences? know
suredly that you have received mercy thereby.

Though God deal not these providences always in subserviency to the covenant of grace, yet there i always mercy in them, always a call in them to con sider the Author of them. Had not God thus deal with you, it may be you had this day been a terro to yourselves, a shame to your relations, and under th punishment due to some notorious sins which you ha conceived. Besides, there is commonly an additiona guilt in sin brought forth, above what is in the mer conception of it. It may be, others would have bee ruined by it here; or drawn into a partnership in si by it, and so have been eternally ruined by it; a which are prevented by these providences: and eter nity will witness, that there is a singularity of mere in them. Do not look on any such things as commo accidents; the hand of God is in them all, and that merciful hand if not despised: if it be, yet God dot good to others by it, the world is the better, and yo are not so wicked as you would be.

[6.] We may also see hence the great use of ma gistracy in the world, that great appointment of Goc Amongst other things, it is peculiarly subservient t this holy providence in obstructing the bringing fort of conceived sin, namely, by the terror of him tha bears the sword. God fixes that on the hearts of ev men which he expresseth; "if thou do that which evil, be afraid; for the power beareth not the sword i vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger t execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," Rom. xi 4. God fixes this on the hearts of men, and by th dread and terror of it closeth the womb of sin that shall not bring forth. When there was no king i Israel, none to put to rebuke, and none of whom ev men were afraid, there was woeful work and have amongst the children of men made in the world, as v

nay see in the last chapters of the book of Judges. The greatest mercies and blessings that in this world we are made partakers of, next to them of the gospel and covenant of grace, come to us through this channel and conduit. And indeed, this whereof we have been speaking, is the proper work of magistracy, namely, to be subservient to the providence of God in obstructing the bringing forth of conceived sin.

These, then, are some of the ways whereby God providentially prevents the bringing forth of sin, by opposing obstacles to the power of the sinner. And by them sin is not consumed, but shut up in the womb. Men are not burthened for it, but with it; not laden in their hearts and consciences with its guilt, but perplexed with its power, which they are not able to exert and satisfy.

II. The way that yet remains for consideration, whereby God obviates the production of conceived sin, is, his working on the will of the sinner, so making sin to consume away in the womb.

There are two ways, in general, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin, by working on the will of the sinner; and they are, first, by restraining grace; secondly, by renewing grace. He doth it, sometimes the one way, sometimes the other. The first of these is common to regenerate and unregenerate persons, the latter peculiar to believers; and God doth it variously as to particulars, by them both. We shall begin with the first of them.

1. God doth this in the way of restraining grace, by some arrow of particular conviction fixed in the heart and conscience of the sinner, in reference to the particular sin which he had conceived. This staggers and changes the mind as to the particular intended, causeth the hands to hang down, and the weapons of

lust to fall out of them. Hereby conceived sin proves abortive. How God doth this work, by what immediate touches, strokes, blows, rebukes of his Spirit; by what reasonings, arguments, and commotion of men's own consciences; is not for us thoroughly to find out. It is done, as was said, in unspeakable variety, and the works of God are past finding out. But as to what light may be given unto it from Scripture instances, after we have manifested the general way of God's procedure, it shall be insisted on.

Thus, then, God dealt in the case of Esau and Jacob. Esau had long conceived his brother's death; he comforted himself with the thoughts of it, and resolutions about it; as is the manner of profligate sinners, Gen. xxvii. 41. Upon his first opportunity he comes forth to execute his intended rage, and Jacob concludes that he would "smite the mother with the children," chap. xxxii. 11. An opportunity is presented unto this wicked and profane person to bring forth that sin that had laid in his heart now twenty years; he hath full power in his hand to perform his purpose. In the midst of this posture of things, God comes in upon his heart with some secret and effectual working of his Spirit and power, changeth him from his purpose, causeth his conceived sin to melt away, so that he falls upon the neck of him with embraces, whom he thought to have slain.

Of the same nature, though the way of it was peculiar, was his dealing with Laban the syrian in reference to the same Jacob, chap. xxxi. 24. By a dream, a vision in the night, God hinders him from so much as speaking roughly to him. It was with him as in Mic. ii. 1, he had devised evil on his bed; and when he thought to have practised it in the morning, God interposed in a dream, and hides sin from him, as he

peaks, Job xxxiii. 15—17. To the same purpose s that of the psalmist concerning the people of God; " he made them to be pitied of all those that carried hem captives," Psa. cvi. 46. Men usually deal in igour with those whom they have taken captive in var. It was the way of old to rule captives with force nd cruelty. Here God turns and changes their earts, not in general unto himself, but to this parti-ular, of respect to his people. And in this way in eneral doth God every day prevent the bringing forth f a world of sin. He sharpens arrows of conviction pon the spirits of men, as to the particular that they re engaged in. Their hearts are not changed as to n, but their minds are altered as to this or that sin. 'hey break, it may be, the vessel they had fashioned, nd go to work upon some other.

Now, that we may a little see into the ways whereby 'od doth accomplish this work, we must premise the nsuing considerations. First, that the general me-ium wherein the matter of restraining grace doth onsist, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth f sin, doth lie in certain arguments and reasonings, resented to the mind of the sinner, whereby he is duced to desert his purpose, to change and alter his ind as to the sin he had conceived. Reasons against are presented unto him, which prevail upon him to linquish his design, and give over his purpose. This the general way of the working of restraining grace; is by arguments and reasonings, rising up against e perpetration of conceived sin. Secondly, that no guments or reasonings, as such materially considered, e sufficient to stop or hinder any purpose of sinning, to cause conceived sin to prove abortive, if the sin-er have power and opportunity to bring it forth. hey are not in themselves, and on their own account,

restraining grace; for if they were, the administration and communication of grace, as grace, would be left unto every man who is able to give advice against sin. Nothing is or can be called grace, though common and such as may perish, but with respect unto its peculiar relation to God. God, by the power of his Spirit, making arguments and reasons effectual and prevailing, turns that to be grace, I mean of this kind, which in itself and in its own nature, was bare reason. And that efficacy of the Spirit, which the Lord puts forth in these persuasions and motives, is that which we call restraining grace. These things being premised, we shall now consider some of the arguments which we find that he hath made use of to this end and purpose.

(1.) God stops many men in their ways upon the conception of sin, by an argument taken from the difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing that they aim at. They have a mind unto it, but God sets a hedge and a wall before them, that they shall judge it to be so hard and difficult to accomplish what they intend, that it is better for them to let it alone and give over. Thus Herod would have put John the Baptist to death upon the first provocation; but he feared the multitude because they accounted him as a prophet, Matt. xiv. 5. He had conceived his murder, and was free for the execution of it: God raised this consideration in his heart, If I kill him the people will tumultuate, he hath a great party amongst them, and sedition will arise that may cost me my life or kingdom. He feared the multitude, and durst not execute the wickedness he had conceived, because of the difficulty he foresaw he should be entangled withal. And God made the argument effectual for the season; for otherwise, we know that men will venture the utmost hazards for th

atisfaction of their lusts, as he did afterwards. The harisees were in the very same state and condition, Iatt. xxi. 26. They would fain have decried the inistry of John, but durst not for fear of the people: nd by the same argument, ver. 46, were they deter-ed from killing our Saviour, who had highly provoked nem by a parable setting out their deserved and ap-roaching destruction. They durst not do it for fear f a tumult among the people, seeing they looked on im as a prophet. Thus God overawes the hearts of nnumerable persons in the world every day, and caus-h them to desist from attempting to bring forth the ns which they had conceived. Difficulties they shall e sure to meet withal; yea, it is likely, if they should tempt it, it would prove impossible for them to ac-omplish. We owe much of our quiet in this world nto the efficacy given to this consideration in the earts of men by the Holy Ghost; adulteries, rapines, urders, are obviated and stifled by it. Men would ngage in them daily, but that they judge it impossi-e for them to fulfil what they aimed at.

(2.) God doth it by an argument taken from the conveniences, evils, and troubles that will befall men the pursuit of sin. If they follow it, this or that convenience will ensue, this trouble, this evil, tem-oral or natural. And this argument, as managed by e Spirit of God, is the great engine in his hand hereby he casts up banks and gives bounds to the sts of men, that they break not out to the confusion all that order and beauty which yet remains in the orks of his hands. Paul gives us the general import this argument; "For when the gentiles, which ve not the law, do by nature the things contained the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto emselves: which show the work of the law written

in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another," Rom. ii. 14, 15. If any men in the world may be thought to be given up to pursue and fulfil all the sins that their lusts can conceive, it is those that have not the law, to whom the written law of God doth not denounce the evil that attends it. But though they have it not, saith the apostle, they show forth the work of it; they do many things which it requireth, and forbear or abstain from many things that it forbiddeth, and so show forth its work and efficacy. But whence is it that they do so? Why, their thoughts accuse or excuse them. It is the consideration and arguings that they have within themselves about sin and its consequents, which prevail upon them to abstain from many things that their hearts would carry them out unto. For conscience is a man's prejudging of himself, with respect unto the future judgment of God. Thus Felix was staggered in his pursuit of sin, when he trembled at Paul's preaching of righteousness and judgment to come, Acts xxiv. 25. So Job tells us, that the consideration of punishment from God hath a strong influence on the minds of men, to keep them from sin, chap. xxxi. 1—3. How the Lord makes use of that consideration, even towards his own, when they have broken the cords of his love and cast off the rule of his grace for a season, I have before declared.

(3.) God doth this same work, by making effectual an argument from the unprofitableness of the thing that men are engaged in. By this were the brethren of Joseph stayed from slaying him; "what profit is it," say they, "if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?" Gen. xxxvii. 26, 27. We shall get nothing by it, it will bring in no advantage to

atisfaction unto us. And the heads of this, God's vay of obstructing conceived sin, or the springs of hese kinds of arguments, are so many and various hat it is impossible to insist particularly upon them. There is nothing present or to come, nothing belonging to this life or another, nothing desirable or undesirable, nothing good or evil, but at one time or nother an argument may be taken from it for the obtruction of sin.

(4.) God accomplisheth this work by arguments aken from what is good and honest, what is comely, raiseworthy, and acceptable unto himself. This is he great road wherein he walks with his saints under heir temptations, or in their conceptions of sin. He ecovers effectually upon their minds a consideration f all those springs and motives to obedience which re discovered and proposed in the gospel; some at ne time, some at another. He minds them of his wn love, mercy, and kindness; his eternal love, with ne fruits of it, whereof themselves have been made artakers. He minds them of the blood of his Son, is cross, sufferings, tremendous undertaking in the ork of mediation, and the concernment of his heart, ove, honour, name, in their obedience: minds them f the love of the Spirit, with all his consolations hich they have been made partakers of, and privileges herewith they have by him been intrusted: minds hem of the gospel, the glory and beauty of it as revealed unto their souls: minds them of the excellency nd comeliness of obedience, of their performance of hat duty they owe to God, and that peace, quietness, nd serenity of mind that they have enjoyed therein. On the other side he minds them of being a provocaon, by sin, unto the eyes of his glory; saying in heir hearts, "Do not that abominable thing which

my soul hateth:" minds them of their wounding the Lord Christ, and putting him to shame; of their grieving the Holy Spirit, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption; of their defiling his dwelling-place: minds them of the reproach, dishonours, scandal, which they bring on the gospel and the profession thereof: minds them of the terrors, darkness, wounds, want of peace, that they may bring upon their own souls. From these and like considerations doth God put a stop to the progress of the law of sin in the heart, that it shall not go on to bring forth the evil which it hath conceived. I could give instances in arguments of all these several kinds recorded in the Scripture, but it would be too long a work for us, who are now engaged in a design of another nature. But one or two examples may be mentioned. Joseph resists his first temptation on one of these accounts; "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. The evil of sinning against God, his God, that consideration alone detains him from the least inclination to his temptation. It is sin against God, to whom I owe all obedience; the God of my life, and of all my mercies: I will not do it. The argument wherewith Abigail prevailed on David, to withhold him from self-revenge and murder, was of the same nature, and he acknowledgeth that it was from the Lord, 1 Sam. xxv. 31, 32. I shall add no more; for all the Scripture motives which we have to duty, made effectual by grace, are instances of this way of God's procedure.

Sometimes, I confess, God secretly works the hearts of men by his own finger, without the use and means of such arguments as those insisted on to stop the progress of sin. So he tells Abimelech; "I have withheld thee from sinning against me," Gen. xx. 6.

ow this could not be done by any of the arguments hich we have insisted on, because Abimelech knew ot that the thing which he intended was sin; and erefore he pleads, that in the integrity of his heart nd innocency of his hands he did it, ver. 5. God rned about his will and thoughts that he should ot accomplish his intention; but by what ways or eans is not revealed. Nor is it evident what course e took in the change of Esau's heart, when he came ut against his brother to destroy him, Gen. xxxiii. . Whether he stirred up in him a fresh spring of atural affections, or caused him to consider what rief by this means he should bring to his aged father, ho loved him so tenderly; or whether, being now rown great and wealthy, he more and more despised e matter of difference between him and his brother, nd so utterly slighted it; it is not known. It may e, God did it by an immediate powerful act of his pirit upon his heart, without the intervention of any these or the like considerations. Now, though the ings mentioned are, in themselves, at other times, eble and weak, yet when they are managed by the pirit of God to such an end and purpose, they cerinly become effectual, and are the matter of his preenting grace.

2. God prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin, y real spiritual saving grace; and that either in the rst conversion of sinners, or in the following supplies it.

(1.) This is one part of the mystery of his grace nd love. He meets men sometimes in their highest solutions for sin, with the highest efficacy of his race. Hereby he manifests the power of his own race, and gives the soul a further experience of the w of sin, when it takes such a farewell of it, as to be

changed in the midst of its resolutions to serve th lusts thereof. By this he melts down the lusts o men, causeth them to wither at the root, that the shall no more strive to bring forth what they hav conceived, but be filled with shame and sorrow a their conception. An example and instance of thi proceeding of God, for the use and instruction of al generations, we have in Paul. His heart was full o wickedness, blasphemy, and persecution; his concep tion of them was come unto rage and madness, and full purpose of exercising them all to the utmost. S the story relates it, Acts ix. So himself declares th state to have been with him, Acts xxvi. 9—12 1 Tim. i. 13. In the midst of all this violent pursui of sin, a voice from heaven shuts up the womb an dries the breasts of it, and he cries, "Lord, what wil thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. The same perso seems to intimate that this is the way of God's pro cedure with others, even to meet them with his con verting grace in the height of their sin and folly. Fo he himself, he says, was a pattern of God's dealin with others; as he dealt with him, so also would h do with some such like sinners. "For this cause obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ migh show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to the which should hereafter believe on him to life eve lasting," 1 Tim. i. 16. And we have not a few ex amples of it in our own days. Sundry persons, goin on set purpose to this or that place to deride and sco at the dispensation of the word, have been met with in the very place wherein they designed to serve the lusts and Satan, and have been cast down at the fo of God. This way of God's dealing with sinners at large set forth in Job xxxiii. 15—18. Dionysi the areopagite is another instance of this work

od's grace and love. Paul is dragged either by
n, or before him, to plead for his life, as a setter
th of strange gods, which at Athens was death by
e law. In the midst of this frame of spirit God
eets with him by converting grace; sin withers in
e womb, and he cleaves to Paul and his doctrine,
cts xvii. 18—34. The like dispensation towards
ael we have, Hosea xi. 7—10. But there is no
ed to insist on more instances of this observation.
od is pleased to leave no generation unconvinced of this
th, if they do but attend to their own experiences, and
e examples of this work of his mercy amongst them.
ery day, one or other is taken in the fulness of the
rpose of his heart to go on in sin, in this or that sin, and
topped in his course by the power of converting grace.
(2.) God doth it by the same grace in the renewed
mmunications of it, that is, by special assisting
ce. This is the common way of his dealing with
ievers in this case. That they also, through the
ceitfulness of sin, may be carried on to the conceiv-
of this or that sin, was before declared. God puts
top to their progress, or rather to the prevalency of
e law of sin in them, and that by giving in unto
m special assistances, needful for their preservation
d deliverance. As David says of himself, "My
t were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slip-
d," Psa. lxxiii. 2. He was at the brink of unbe-
ving, despairing thoughts and conclusions about
d's providence in the government of the world;
m whence he was recovered, as he afterwards de-
res. So is it with many a believer; he is oftentimes
the very brink, at the very door, of some folly or
quity, when God puts in by the efficacy of actually
isting grace, and recovers him to an obediential
me of heart again. And this is a peculiar work of

Christ, wherein he manifests and exerts his faithfulness towards his own; "he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18. It is not an absolute power, but a power clothed with mercy, that is intended; such a power as is put forth from a sense of the suffering of poor believers under their temptations. And how doth he exercise this merciful ability towards us? He gives forth, and we find in him, "grace to help in time of need," seasonable help and assistance for our deliverance, when we are ready to be overpowered by sin and temptation; Heb. iv. 16. When lust hath conceived and is ready to bring forth; when the soul lies at the brink of some iniquity; he gives in seasonable help, relief, deliverance, and safety. Here lies a great part of the care and faithfulness of Christ towards his poor saints. He will not suffer them to be worried with the power of sin, nor to be carried out unto ways that shall dishonour the gospel, or fill them with shame and reproach, and so render them useless in the world; but he steps in with the saving relief and assistance of his grace, stops the course of sin, and makes them in himself "more than conquerors." And this assistance lies under the promise; "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. Temptation shall try us; it is for our good; many holy ends doth the Lord compass and bring about by it. But when we are tried to the utmost of our ability so that one assault more would overbear us, a way of escape is provided. And as this may be done several ways, as I have elsewhere declared, so this we are now upon is one of the most eminent, namely, by supplie

of grace, to enable the soul to bear up, resist, and conquer. And when once God begins to deal in this way of love with a soul, he will not cease to add one supply after another, until the whole work of his grace and faithfulness be accomplished. An example hereof we have, Isa. lvii. 17, 18. Poor sinners there are so far captivated to the power of their lusts, that the first and second dealings of God with them are not effectual for their delivery: but he will not give over; he is in the pursuit of a design of love towards them, and so ceaseth not until they are recovered. These are the general heads of the second way whereby God hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, namely, by working on the will of the sinner. He doth it either by common convictions or special grace, so that of their own accord they shall let go the purpose and will of sinning that they are risen up unto. And this is no mean way of his providing for his own glory, and the honour of his gospel in the world, whose professors would stain the whole beauty of it, were they left to themselves to bring forth all the evil that is conceived in their hearts.

Besides these general ways, there is one yet more special, that at once worketh both upon the power and will of the sinner; and this is the way of afflictions, concerning which one word shall close this discourse. Afflictions, I say, work by both these ways in reference to conceived sin. They work providentially on the power of the creature. When a man hath conceived a sin, and is in full purpose of the pursuit of it, God oftentimes sends a sickness and abates his strength, or a loss cuts him short in his plenty, and so takes him off in the pursuit of his lusts, though it may be his heart is not weaned from them. His power is weakened, and he cannot do the evil that

he would. In this sense it belongs to the first way of God's obviating the production of sin. Great afflictions work, sometimes, not from their own nature immediately and directly, but from the gracious purpose and intendment of him that sends them. He insinuates into the dispensation of them, that of grace and power, of love and kindness, which shall effectually take off the heart and mind from sin. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word," Psa. cxix. 67. And in this way, because of the predominancy of renewing and assisting grace, they belong unto the latter means of preventing sin.

And these are some of the ways which at present we shall instance in, whereby it pleaseth God to put a stop to the progress of sin, both in believers and unbelievers: and if we would endeavour further to search out his ways unto perfection, yet we must still conclude, that it is but a "little portion which we know of him."

CHAPTER XIV.

The power of sin further demonstrated by the effects it hath had in the lives of professors. First, in actual sins; secondly, in habitual declensions.

We now are to proceed unto other evidences of that sad truth which we are in the demonstration of. But the main of our work being past through, I shall be more brief in the management of the arguments that do remain.

That then which, in the next place, may be fixed upon, is the demonstration which this law of sin hath

in all ages given of its power and efficacy, by the woeful fruits that it hath brought forth even in believers themselves. Now these are of two sorts. First, the great actual eruptions of sin in their lives; secondly, their habitual declensions from the frames, state, and condition of obedience and communion with God which they had obtained. Both which, by the rules of James before unfolded, are to be laid to the account of this law of sin, and belong unto the fourth head of its progress; and are both of them convincing evidences of its power and efficacy.

I. Consider the fearful eruptions of actual sins that have been in the lives of believers, and we shall find our position evidenced. Should I go through at large with this consideration, I must recount all the sad and scandalous failings of the saints that are left on record in the holy Scriptures. But the particulars of them are known to all, so that I shall not need to mention them, nor the many aggravations that in their circumstances they are attended with; only some few things, tending to the rendering of our present consideration of them useful, may be remarked. As,

1. They are, most of them, in the lives of men that were not of the lowest form or ordinary sort of believers, but of men that had a peculiar eminency in them, on the account of their walking with God in their generations. Such were Noah, Lot, David, Hezekiah, and others. They were not men of an ordinary size, but higher than their brethren by the shoulders and upwards, in profession, yea in real holiness. And surely that must needs be of a mighty efficacy, that could hurry such giants in the ways of God into such abominable sins as they fell into. An ordinary engine could never have turned them out of the course of their obedience. It was a poison that

no athletic constitution of spiritual health, no antidote, could withstand.

2. And these very men fell not into their great sins at the beginning of their profession, when they had had but little experience of the goodness of God, of the sweetness and pleasantness of obedience, of the power and craft of sin, of its impulsions, solicitations, and surprisals; but after a long course of walking with God, and acquaintance with all these things, together with innumerable motives unto watchfulness. Noah, according to the lives of men in those days of the world, had walked uprightly with God some hundreds of years, before he was so surprised as he was. Righteous Lot appears to have been towards the end of his days, ere he defiled himself with the abominations recorded. David, in a short life, had as much experience of grace and sin, and as much close spiritual communion with God, as ever had any of the sons of men, before he was cast to the ground by this law of sin. So was it with Hezekiah, in his degree, which was none of the meanest. Now, to set upon such persons, so well acquainted with its power and deceit, so armed and provided against it, who had been conquerors over it for so many years, and to prevail against them; it argues a power and efficacy too mighty for every thing but the Spirit of the Almighty to withstand. Who can look to have a greater stock of inherent grace than those men had? to have more experience of God and the excellency of his ways, the sweetness of his love, and of communion with him, than they had? Who hath either better furniture to oppose sin withal, or more obligations so to do, than they? And yet we see how fearfully they were prevailed against.

3. As if God had permitted their falls on set pur-

pose that we might learn to be wary of this powerful enemy, they all of them fell out when they had newly received great and stupendous mercies from the hand of God, which ought to have been strong obligations unto diligence and watchfulness in close obedience. Noah was but newly come forth of that world of waters, wherein he saw the ungodly world perishing for their sins, and himself preserved by that astonishing miracle which all ages must admire. Whilst the world's desolation was an hourly remembrancer unto him of his strange preservation by the immediate care and hand of God, he falls into drunkenness. Lot had newly seen that, at which every one that thinks on it cannot but tremble. He saw, as one speaks, hell coming out of heaven upon unclean sinners; the greatest evidence, except the cross of Christ, that God ever gave in his providence of the judgment to come. He saw himself and children delivered by the special care and miraculous hand of God, and yet, while these strange mercies were fresh upon him, he fell into drunkenness and incest. David was delivered out of all his troubles, and had the necks of his enemies given him round about; and he makes use of his peace from a world of trials and troubles, to contrive murder and adultery. Immediately it was after Hezekiah's great and miraculous deliverance, that he falls into his carnal pride and boasting. I say, their falls in such season, seem to be permitted on set purpose to instruct us all in the truth that we have in hand; so that no persons, in no seasons, with what furniture of grace soever, can promise themselves security from its prevalency, any other ways than by keeping close constantly to Him, who hath supplies to give out that are above its reach and efficacy. Methinks this should make us look about us. Are we

better than Noah, who had that testimony from God, that he was a "perfect man in his generation, and walked with God?". Are we better than Lot, "whose righteous soul was vexed" with the evil deeds of ungodly men, for which he is commended by the Holy Ghost? Are we more holy, wise, and watchful than David, who obtained this testimony, that he was "a man after God's own heart?" Or better then Hezekiah, who appealed to God himself, that he had served him uprightly with a perfect heart? And yet what prevalency this law of sin wrought in and over them we see. And there is no end of the like examples. They are all set up as buoys, to discover unto us the sands, the shelves, the rocks, whereupon they made their shipwreck, to their hazard, danger, loss; yea, and would have done to their ruin, had not God been pleased, in his faithfulness, graciously to prevent it. And this is the first part of this evidence of the power of sin from its effects.

II. In the second part, it manifests its power in the habitual declensions which are found in many believers, from zeal and holiness, from the frames, state, and condition of obedience and communion with God, whereunto they had attained. Promises of growth and improvement are many and precious; the means excellent and effectual; the benefits great and unspeakable; yet it often falls out, that instead hereof, decays and declensions are found upon professors, yea, in and upon many of the saints of God. Now whereas this must needs principally and chiefly be from the strength and efficacy of indwelling sin, and is therefore great evidence thereof, I shall first evince the observation itself to be true, namely, that some of the saints themselves do oftentimes thus decline from that growth and improvement in faith, grace, and holiness;

which might justly be expected from them; and then show that the cause of this evil lies in that we are treating of. And that it is the cause of total apostasy in unsound professors, shall be afterwards declared. But this is a greater work which we have in hand. The prevailing upon true believers unto a sinful declension and gradual apostasy, requires a putting forth of more strength and efficacy, than the prevailing upon unsound professors unto total apostasy; as the wind which will blow down a dead tree, that hath no root in the ground, will scarcely shake or bow a living, well-rooted tree. But this it will do. There is mention made in Scripture of the first ways of David, and they are commended above his latter, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. The last ways, even of David, were tainted with the power of indwelling sin. Though we have mention only of the actual eruption of sin, yet that uncleanness, and pride which was working in him in his numbering of the people, were certainly rooted in a declension from his first frame. Those rushes did not grow without mire. David would not have done so in his younger days, when he followed God in the wilderness of temptations and trials, full of faith, love, humility, brokenness of heart, zeal, tender affection unto all the ordinances of God; all which were eminent in him. But his strength is impaired by the efficacy and deceitfulness of sin, his locks cut, and he becomes a prey to vile lusts and temptations. We have a notable instance in most of the churches that our Saviour awakens to the consideration of their condition in the Revelation. We may single out one of them. Many good things there were in the church of Ephesus, for which it is greatly commended, Rev. ii. 2, 3. But yet it is charged with a decay, a declension, a gradual falling off and apostasy; "thou hast

left thy first love; remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and do the first works," ver. 4, 5. There was a decay, both inward, in the frame of heart as to faith and love, and outward, as to obedience and works, in comparison of what they had formerly by the testimony of Christ himself. The same also might be shown concerning the rest of those churches, only one or two of them excepted. Five of them are charged with decays and declensions. Hence there is mention in Scripture of the "kindness of youth," of the "love of espousals," with great commendation, Jer. ii. 2, 3: of our "first faith," 1 Tim. v. 12: of the "beginning of our confidence," Heb. iii. 14. And cautions are given, that "we lose not those things which we have wrought," 2 John 8. But what need we look back or search for instances to confirm the truth of this observation? An habitual declension from first engagements to God, from first attainments of communion with God, from first strictness in duties and obedience, is ordinary and common amongst professors.

Might we to this purpose take a general view of the professors in these nations, among whom the lot of the best of us will be found to fall, in part or in whole, in somewhat or in all, we might be plentifully convinced of the truth of this observation. Is their zeal for God as warm, lively, vigorous, effectual, solicitous, as it was in their first giving themselves unto God? Or rather, is there not a common, slight, selfish frame of spirit, come in the room of it upon most professors? Iniquity hath abounded, and their love hath waxed cold. Was it not of old a burthen to their spirits to hear the name, and ways, and worship of God, blasphemed and profaned? Could they not have said with the psalmist, "rivers of water run

down our eyes, because men keep not thy law?" Psa. cxix. 136. Were not their souls solicitous about the interest of Christ in the world, like Eli's about the ark? Did they not contend earnestly for the "truth once delivered to the saints," and every parcel of it, especially wherein the grace of God and the glory of the gospel were especially concerned? Did they not labour to judge and condemn the world, by a holy and separate conversation? and do now the generality of professors abide in this frame? Have they grown and made improvement in it, or is there not a coldness and indifference grown up on the spirits of many in this thing? Yea, do not many despise all these things, and look upon their own former zeal as folly? May we not see many, who have formerly been in esteem in ways of profession, become daily a scorn and reproach, through their miscarriages, and that justly, to the men of the world? Is it not with them as it was of old with the daughters of Sion, when God judged them for their sins and wantonness? Isa. iii. 24. Hath not the world and self utterly ruined their profession? and are they not regardless of the things wherein they have formerly declared a singular concernment? Yea, are not some, partly on one pretence, partly on another, come to an open enmity unto and hatred of the ways of God? They please them no more, but are evil in their eyes. But not to mention such open apostates any further, whose hypocrisy the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly judge, how is it with the best? Are not almost all men grown cold and slack as to these things? Are they not less concerned in them than formerly? Are they not grown weary, selfish in their religion? and, so things be indifferent well at home, scarce care how they go abroad in the world? at least, do they not prefer their ease, credit,

safety, secular advantages, before these things? a frame that Christ abhors, and declares that those in whom it is found are none of his. Some indeed seem to retain a good zeal for truth, but wherein they make the fairest appearance, therein will they be found to be most abominable. They cry out against errors, not for truth, but for party, and interest's sake. Let a man be on their party and promote their interest, be he never so corrupt in his judgment, he is embraced, and, it may be, admired. This is not zeal for God, but for a man's self. It is not "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" but, "Master, forbid them, because they follow not with us." Better it were, doubtless, for men never to pretend unto any zeal at all, than to substitute such wrathful selfishness in the room of it.

Further, is men's delight in the ordinances and worship of God the same as in former days? Do they find the same sweetness and relish in them as they have done of old? How precious hath the word been to them formerly! What joy and delight have they had in attendance thereon! How would they have run and gone, to have been made partakers of it, where it was dispensed in its power and purity, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit? Did they not call the sabbath their delight, and was not the approach of it a real joy unto their souls? Did they not long after the converse and communion of saints? and could they not undergo manifold perils for the attainment of it? And doth this frame still abide upon them? Are there not decays and declensions to be found amongst them? May it not be said, "Grey hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not?" Yea, are not men ready to say with them of old, "what a weariness is it!" Mal. i. 13. It is even

a burthen and a weariness to be tied up to the observation of all these ordinances. What need we be at all so strict in the observation of the sabbath? What need we hear so often? What need of this distinction in hearing? Insensibly a great disrespect, yea even a contempt, of the pleasant and excellent ways of Christ and his gospel, is fallen upon many professors.

Again, may not the same conviction be further carried on, by an inquiry into the universal course of obedience, and the performance of duties that men have been engaged in? Is there the same conscientious tenderness of sinning abiding in many as was in days of old? the same exact performance of private duties? the same love to the brethren? the same readiness for the cross? the same humility of mind and spirit? the same self-denial? The steam of men's lusts, wherewith the air is tainted, will not suffer us to say.

We need, then, go no farther than this wretched generation wherein we live, to evince the truth of the observation laid down as the foundation of the instance insisted on. The Lord give repentance before it be too late!

Now all these declensions, all these decays, that are found in some professors, proceed from this root and cause; they are all the product of indwelling sin, and all evince the exceeding power and efficacy of it. For the proof whereof I shall not need to go farther than the general rule out of James, which we have already considered; namely, that lust, or indwelling sin, is the cause of all actual sin, and all habitual declensions in believers. This is that which the apostle intends in that place to teach and declare. I shall, therefore, handle these two things, and show, first, that this doth evince a great efficacy and power in sin; secondly, declare the ways and means whereby it brings

forth, or brings about, this cursed effect; all in design of our general end, in calling upon and cautioning believers to avoid it, to oppose it.

1. It appears to be a work of great power and efficacy, from the provision that is made against it, which it prevails over. There is, in the covenant of grace, plentiful provisions made, not only for the preventing of declension and decay in believers, but also for their continual carrying on towards perfection. As,

(1.) The word itself, and all the ordinances of the gospel, are appointed and given unto us for this end; Eph. iv. 11—15. That which is the end of giving gospel officers to the church, is the end also of giving all the ordinances to be administered by them. For they are given for "the work of the ministry," that is, for the administration of the ordinances of the gospel. Now what is, or what are, these ends? They are all for the preventing of decays and declensions in the saints, all for the carrying them on to perfection; ver. 12. In general, it is for "the perfecting of the saints," the carrying on the work of grace in them and the work of holiness and obedience by them: or "for the edifying of the body of Christ," their building up in an increase of faith and love, even of every true member of the mystical body. But how far are they appointed thus to carry them on, thus to build them up? Hath it bounds fixed to its work? Doth it carry them so far, and then leave them? No, saith the apostle; "till we all come, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. This dispensation of the word of the gospel and the ordinances thereof, is designed for our help, assistance, and furtherance, until the whole work of faith and obedience is consummate. It is appointed to perfect and complete that faith, know-

ledge, and growth in grace and holiness, which is allotted unto us in this world. But what if oppositions and temptations do lie in the way, Satan and his instruments working with great subtlety and deceit? Why, these ordinances are designed for our safeguarding and deliverance from all their attempts and assaults; that so, being preserved in the use of them, or "speaking the truth in love, we may grow up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ Jesus," ver. 14, 15. This is, in general, the use of all gospel ordinances, the chief and main end for which they were given and appointed by God; namely, to preserve believers from all decays of faith and obedience, and to carry them on still towards perfection. These are means which God, the good Husbandman, makes use of to cause the vine to thrive and bring forth fruit. And I could also manifest the same to be the special end of them distinctly. Briefly, the word is milk and strong meat, for the nourishing and strengthening of all sorts, and all degrees, of believers. It hath both seed and water in it, and manuring with it, to make them fruitful. The ordinance of the supper is appointed on purpose for the strengthening of our faith, in the remembrance of the death of the Lord, and the exercise of love one towards another. The communion of saints is for the edifying each other in faith, love, and obedience.

(2.) There is that which adds weight to this consideration. God suffers us not to be unmindful of this assistance he hath afforded us, but is continually calling upon us to make use of the means appointed for the attaining of the end proposed. He shows them unto us as the angel showed the water-spring to Hagar. Commands, exhortations, promises, threatenings, are multiplied to this purpose; see them summed

up, Heb. ii. 1. He is continually saying to us, Why will you die? Why will you wither and decay? Come to the pastures prepared for you, and your souls shall live. If we see a lamb run from the fold into the wilderness, we wonder not if it be torn and rent by wild beasts: if we see a sheep leaving its green pastures and water-courses, to abide in dry, barren heaths, we count it no marvel, and inquire no further, if we see him lean and ready to perish. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, we wonder at the boldness and rage of the beasts of prey that durst set upon them there. If we see sheep pining in full pastures, we judge them to be diseased and unsound. It is indeed no marvel that poor creatures, who forsake their own mercies, and run away from the pasture and fold of Christ in his ordinances, are rent and torn with divers lusts, and do pine away with hunger and famine. But to see men living under and enjoying all the means of spiritual thriving, yet to decay, not to be fat and flourishing but rather daily to pine and wither, this argues some secret, powerful distemper, whose poisonous and noxious qualities hinder the virtue and efficacy of the means they enjoy. This is indwelling sin. So wonderfully powerful, so effectually poisonous is it, that it can bring leanness on the souls of men in the midst of all precious means of growth and flourishing. It may well make us tremble, to see men living under and in the use of the means of the gospel, preaching, praying, administration of sacraments; and yet grow colder every day than another in zeal for God, more selfish and worldly; even habitually to decline, as to the degrees of holiness which they had attained unto.

(3.) Together with the dispensation of the outward means of spiritual growth or improvement, there are also supplies of grace continually afforded the

saints from their head, Christ Jesus. He is the head of all the saints. And he is a living head, and so a living head as that he tells us, that because he liveth, we shall live also, John xiv. 19. He communicates of spiritual life to all that are his. In him is the fountain of our life, which is therefore said to be "hid with him in God," Col. iii. 3. And this life he gives unto his saints by quickening them by his Spirit, Rom. viii. 11. And he continues it unto them by the supplies of living grace which he communicates to them. From these two, his quickening us, and continually giving out supplies of life unto us, he is said to live in us: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. The spiritual life which I have is not mine own; not from myself was it educed, not by myself is it maintained, but it is merely and solely the work of Christ; so that it is not I that live, but he lives in me, the whole of my life being from him alone. Neither doth this living head communicate only a bare life unto believers, that they should merely live, and no more; a poor, weak, dying life, as it were; but he gives out sufficiently to afford them a strong, vigorous, thriving, flourishing life. He comes, not only that his sheep may have life, but that "they may have it more abundantly," John x. 10; that is, in a plentiful manner, so as that they may flourish, be fat and fruitful. Thus it is with the whole body of Christ, and every member thereof; whereby it "grows up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," Eph. iv. 15, 16. The end of all communications of grace, and supplies of life, from this

living head, is the increase of the whole body and every member of it, and the edifying of itself in love. His treasures of grace are unsearchable, his stores inexhaustible; his life, the fountain of ours, full and eternal; his heart bounteous and large, his hand open and liberal; so that there is no doubt but that he communicates supplies of grace, for their increase in holiness, abundantly unto all his saints. Whence then is it, that they do not all flourish and thrive exceedingly? As you may see it oftentimes in a natural body, so it is here. Though the seat and rise of the blood and spirits in the head and heart be exceedingly good and sound, yet there may be a withering member in the body; somewhat intercepts the influences of life unto it. So that though the heart and head do perform their office, in giving supplies no less to that than they do to any other member, yet all the effect produced is merely to keep it from utterly perishing; it grows weak and decays every day. The withering and decaying of any member in Christ's mystical body, is not for want of his communication of grace for an abundant life, but from the powerful interception that is made of the efficacy of it, by the interposition and opposition of indwelling sin. Hence it is, that where lust grows strong, a great deal of grace will but keep the soul alive, and not give it any eminency in fruitfulness at all. Oftentimes Christ gives very much grace, where not many of its effects do appear. It spends its strength and power in withstanding the continual assaults of violent corruptions and lusts, so that it cannot put forth its proper virtue towards further fruitfulness. As a virtuous medicine, that is fit to check vicious and noxious humours, and to comfort, refresh, and strengthen nature, if the evil humour be strong and greatly prevailing, spends its whole strength

and virtue in the subduing and correcting of it, contributing much less to the relief of nature than otherwise it would do if it met not with such oppositions; so it is with the eye-salve and the healing grace, which we have abundantly from the wings of the Sun of righteousness. It is forced oftentimes to put forth its virtue to oppose and contend against, and in any measure subdue, prevailing lusts and corruptions. That the soul receiveth not that strengthening unto duties and fruitfulness which otherwise it might receive by it, is from hence. How sound, healthy, and flourishing, how fruitful and exemplary in holiness, might many a soul be, by and with that grace which is continually communicated to it from Christ, which now, by reason of the power of indwelling sin, is only not dead, but weak, withering, and useless. And this, if any thing, is a notable evidence of the efficacy of indwelling sin, that it is able to give such a stop and check to the mighty and effectual powers of grace; so that notwithstanding the blessed and continual supplies that we receive from our head, yet many believers do decline and decay, and that habitually, as to what they had attained unto; their last ways not answering their first. This makes the vineyard in the very fruitful hill to bring forth so many wild grapes. This makes so many trees barren in fertile fields.

(4.) Besides the continual supplies of grace that are constantly, according to the tenor of the covenant, communicated unto believers, which keep them that they thirst no more as to a total indigence; there is, moreover, a readiness in the Lord Christ to yield peculiar succour to the souls of his, according as their occasions shall require. The apostle tells us that he is "a merciful High Priest, and able," that is, ready prepared and willing, "to succour them that are tempted,"

Heb. ii. 18. And we are on that account invited to "come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" that is, grace sufficient, seasonable, suitable unto any special trial or temptation that we may be exercised withal. Our merciful High Priest is ready to give out this especial, seasonable grace, over and above those constant communications of supplies of the Spirit, which we mentioned before. Besides the never-failing springs of ordinary covenant grace, he hath also peculiar refreshing showers for times of drought. And this is exceedingly to the advantage of the saints, for their preservation and growth in grace; and there may very many more of the like nature be added. But now, I say, notwithstanding all these, and the residue of the like importance, such is the power and efficacy of indwelling sin, so great its deceitfulness and restlessness, so many its wiles and temptations, that it often falls out, that many of them, for whose growth and improvement all this provision is made, do yet, as was shown, go back and decline even as to their course of walking with God. Samson's strength fully evidenced itself, when he brake seven new withs and seven new cords wherewith he was bound, as burning tow, and as thread. The noxious humour in the body, which is so stubborn as that no use of the most sovereign remedies can prevail against it, ought to be regarded. Such is this indwelling sin if not watched over; it breaks all the cords made to bind it; it blunts the instruments appointed to root it up; it resists all healing medicines though never so sovereign; and is, therefore, assuredly of exceeding efficacy. Besides, believers have innumerable obligations upon them, from the love, the command of God, to grow in grace, to press forward towards perfection, as

they have abundant means provided for them so to do. Their doing so is a matter of the greatest advantage, profit, sweetness, contentment unto them, in the world; it is the burden, the trouble of their souls, that they do not so do, that they are not more holy, more zealous, useful, fruitful. They desire it above life itself; they know it is their duty to watch against this enemy, to fight against it, to pray against it, and so they do. They more desire its destruction than the enjoyment of all this world, and all that it can afford. And yet notwithstanding all this, such is the subtlety, and fraud, and violence, and fury, and urgency, and importunity, of this adversary, that it frequently prevails to bring them unto the woeful condition mentioned. Hence it is with believers sometimes, as it is with men in some places at sea. They have a good and fair gale of wind, it may be, all night long; they ply their tackling, attend diligently their business, and, it may be, take great delight to consider how they proceed in their voyage. In the morning, or after a season, coming to measure what way they have made and what progress they have had, they find that they are much backward of what they were instead of getting one step forward: falling into a swift tide or current against them, it hath frustrated all their labours, and rendered the wind in their sails almost useless: somewhat thereby they have borne up against the stream, but have made no progress. So it is with believers; they have a good gale of supplies from the Spirit above, they attend duties diligently, pray constantly, hear attentively, and omit nothing that may carry them on in their voyage towards eternity; but after a while, coming seriously to consider, by the examination of their hearts and ways, what progress they have made, they find that all their assistance and duties have not

been able to bear them up against some strong tide or current of indwelling sin. It hath kept them indeed that they have not been driven and split on rocks and shelves; it hath preserved them from gross, scandalous sins; but yet they have lost in their spiritual frame or gone backwards, and are entangled under many woeful decays; which is a notable evidence of the life of sin, about which we are treating. Now, because the end of our discovering the power of sin is, that we may be careful to obviate and prevent it in its operation; and because, of all the effects it produceth, there is none more dangerous or pernicious than that we have last insisted on, namely, that it prevails upon many professors unto an habitual declension from their former ways and attainments, notwithstanding all the sweetness and excellency which their souls have found in them; I shall, as was said, in the next place consider, by what ways and means, and through what assistance, it usually prevails in this kind, that we may the better be instructed to watch against it.

CHAPTER XV.

Decays in degrees of grace caused by indwelling sin. The ways of its prevalency to this purpose.

2. THE ways and means whereby indwelling sin prevaileth on believers unto habitual declensions and decays, as to degrees of grace and holiness, is that which now comes under consideration; and they are many.

(1.) Upon the first conversion and calling of sinners unto God and Christ, they have usually many

fresh springs breaking forth in their souls, and refreshing showers coming upon them, which bear them up to a high rate of faith, love, holiness, fruitfulness, and obedience: as upon a land-flood, when many lesser streams run into a river, it swells over its bounds, and rolls on with a more than ordinary fulness. Now if these springs be not kept open, if they prevail not for the continuance of these showers, they must needs decay and go backwards. We shall name one or two of them.

They have a fresh, vigorous sense of pardoning mercy. According as this is in the soul, so will its love and delight in God, so will its obedience be. As, I say, is the sense of gospel pardon, so will be the life of gospel love. "I say unto thee," saith our Saviour of the poor woman, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," Luke vii. 47. Her great love was an evidence of great forgiveness, and her great sense of it. For our Saviour is not rendering a reason of her forgiveness, as though it were for her love, but of her love, that it was because of her forgiveness. Having in the foregoing parable, from ver. 38, and onward, convinced the pharisees with whom he had to do, that he to whom most was forgiven would love most, he thence gives an account of the great love of the woman, springing from the sense she had of the great forgiveness which she had so freely received. Thus sinners, at their first conversion, are very sensible of great forgiveness. "Of whom I am chief," lies next their heart. This greatly subdues their hearts and spirits unto God, and quickens them unto all obedience; even that such poor cursed sinners as they were, should so freely be delivered and pardoned. The love of God and of

Christ in their forgiveness, highly conquers and constrains them to make it their business to live unto God.

Further, the fresh taste they have had of spiritual things, keeps up such a savour and relish of them in their souls, as that worldly contentments, whereby men are drawn off from close walking with God, are rendered sapless and undesirable unto them. Having tasted of the wine of the gospel, they desire no other, for they say, this is best. So was it with the apostles, upon that option offered them as to a departure from Christ, upon the apostasy of many false professors; "Will ye also go away?" They answer by Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 67, 68. They had such a fresh savour and relish of the doctrine of the gospel and the grace of Christ upon their souls, that they could entertain no thoughts of declining from it. As a man that hath been long kept in a dungeon, if brought forth on a sudden into the light of the sun, finds so much pleasure and contentment in it, in the beauties of the old creation, that he thinks he can never be weary of it, nor shall ever be contented on any account to be under darkness again; so it is with souls when first translated into the marvellous light of Christ, to behold the beauties of the new creation. They see a new glory in him, that hath quite sullied the desirableness of all earthly diversions. And they see a new guilt and filth in sin, that gives them an utter abhorrency of its old delights and pleasures; and so of other things.

Now, whilst these and the like things are kept open in the souls of converted sinners, they constrain them to a vigorous, active holiness. They can never do enough for God; so that oftentimes their zeal as saints suffers them not to escape without some blots

on their prudence as men; as might be instanced in many of the martyrs of old.

This then is the first, at least one way, whereby indwelling sin prepares men for decays and declensions in grace and obedience; it endeavours to stop or taint these springs. And there are several ways whereby it bringeth this to pass.

[1.] It works by sloth and negligence. It prevails in the soul to a neglect of stirring up continual thoughts, of or about the things that so powerfully influence it unto strict and fruitful obedience. If care be not taken, if diligence and watchfulness be not used, and all means observed which are appointed of God to keep a quick and lively sense of them upon the soul, they will dry up and decay, and consequently that obedience that should spring from them will do so also. Isaac digged wells, but the philistines stopped them, and his flocks had no benefit by them. Let the heart never so little disuse itself to gracious, soul-affecting thoughts of the love of God, the cross of Christ, the greatness and excellency of gospel mercy, the beauties of holiness; they will quickly be as much estranged to a man as he can be to them. He that shuts his eyes for a season, in the sun, when he opens them again can see nothing at all. And so much as a man loseth of faith towards these things, so much will they lose of power towards him. Because of his unbelief, they can do little or nothing upon him, which formerly were so exceedingly effectual towards him. So it was with the spouse in the Canticles, chap. v. 2. Christ calls unto her, ver. 1, with a marvellous loving and gracious invitation unto communion with himself. She, who had formerly been ravished at the first hearing of that joyful sound, being now under the power of sloth and carnal ease,

returns a sorry excusing answer to his call, which ended in her own signal loss and sorrow. Indwelling sin, I say, prevailing by spiritual sloth upon the souls of men, unto an inadvertency of the motions of God's Spirit in their former apprehensions of divine love, and a negligence of stirring up continual thoughts of faith about it, a decay grows insensibly upon the whole soul. Thus God often complains that his people had forgotten him, that is, grown unmindful of his love and grace, which was the beginning of their apostasy.

[2.] By unframing the soul, so that it shall have formal, weary, powerless thoughts of those things which should prevail with it unto diligence in thankful obedience. The apostle cautions us, that in dealing with God we should use "reverence and godly fear," because of his purity, holiness, and majesty, Heb. xii. 28, 29. And this is that which the Lord himself spake, in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me," Lev. x. 3. He will be dealt with in an awful, holy, reverent manner. So are we to deal with all the things of God wherein or whereby we have communion with him. The soul is to have a great reverence of God in them. When men begin to take them into slight and common thoughts, not using and improving them unto the utmost for the ends whereunto they are appointed, they lose all their beauty, and glory, and power towards them. When we have any thing to do wherein faith or love towards God is to be exercised, we must do it with all our hearts, with all our minds, strength, and souls; not slightly and perfunctorily, which God abhors. He doth not only require that we bear his love and grace in remembrance, but that, as much as in us lieth, we

do it according to the worth and excellency of them. It was the sin of Hezekiah, that he rendered not again according to the benefits done to him, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. So, whilst we consider gospel truths, the uttermost endeavour of the soul ought to be, that we may be "changed into the same image" or likeness; that is, that they may have their full power and effect upon us, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Otherwise, James tells us what our "beholding the glory of the Lord in a glass," there mentioned by the apostle, (that is, reading or hearing the mind of God in Christ, revealed in the gospel,) comes unto: it "is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," chap. i. 23, 24. It makes no manner of impression upon him, begets no idea nor image of his likeness in his imagination, because he doth it only slightly and with a transient look. So it is with men that will indeed think of gospel truths, but in a slight manner, without endeavouring with all their hearts, minds, and strength, to have them ingrafted upon their souls, and all the effects of them produced in them. Now this is the way of sinners in their first engagements unto God. They never think of pardoning mercy but they labour to affect their whole souls with it, and do stir up themselves unto suitable affections and returns of constant obedience. They think not of the excellency of Christ and spiritual things, now newly discovered unto them in a saving light, but they press with all their might after a further and fuller enjoyment of them. This keeps them humble and holy, this makes them thankful and fruitful. But now, if the utmost diligence and carefulness be not used, to improve and grow in this wisdom, to keep up this frame, indwelling sin,

working by the vanity of the minds of men, will insensibly bring them to content themselves with slight and rare thoughts of these things, without a diligent, sedulous endeavour to give them their due improvement upon the soul. As men decay herein, so they will assuredly decay and decline in the power of holiness and in close walking with God. The springs being stopped or tainted, the streams will not run so swiftly, at least not so sweetly, as formerly. Some, by this means, under an uninterrupted profession, insensibly wither almost into nothing. They talk of religion and spiritual things as much as ever they did in their lives, and perform duties with as much constancy as ever they did, but yet have poor, lean, starving souls, as to any real and effectual communion with God. By the power and subtlety of indwelling sin, they have grown formal, and learned to deal about spiritual things in a slight manner, whereby they have lost all their life, vigour, savour, and efficacy towards them. Be always serious in spiritual things, if ever you intend to be bettered by them.

[3.] Indwelling sin oftentimes prevails to the stopping of these springs of gospel obedience, by false and foolish opinions corrupting the simplicity of the gospel. False opinions are the works of the flesh. From the vanity and darkness of the minds of men, with a mixture more or less of corrupt affections, do they mostly proceed. The apostle was jealous over his Corinthians in this matter; 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. He was afraid lest their minds should "by any means be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," which he knew would be attended by a decay and declension in faith, love, and obedience. And thus matters in this case often fall out. We have seen some who, after they have received a sweet taste of the love of God in

Christ, of the excellency of pardoning mercy, and have walked humbly with God for many years in the faith and apprehension of the truth, have, by the corruption of their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, by false and foolish opinions, despised all their own experiences, and rejected all the efficacy of truth as to the furtherance of their obedience. Hence John cautions the elect lady and her children to take heed they were not seduced, lest they should lose the things that they had wrought, 2 John 8; lest they should themselves cast away all their obedience as lost, and a thing of no value. We have innumerable instances hereof in the days wherein we live. How many are there, who not many years since put an unspeakable value on the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, who delighted in gospel discoveries of spiritual things, and walked in obedience unto God on the account of them; who, being beguiled and turned aside from the truth as it is in Jesus, do despise these springs of their own former obedience. And as this is done grossly and openly in some, so there are more secret and more plausible insinuations of corrupt opinions, tainting the springs and fountains of gospel obedience, and through the vanity of men's minds, which is a principal part of indwelling sin, getting round upon them. Such are all those that tend to the extenuation of special grace, in its freedom and efficacy, and the advancement of the wills or the endeavours of men in their spiritual power and ability. They are all works of the flesh; and howsoever some may pretend a usefulness in them to the promotion of holiness, they will be found to taint the springs of true evangelical obedience, insensibly to turn the heart from God, and to bring the whole soul into a spiritual decay.

And this is one way whereby indwelling sin produceth this pernicious effect, of drawing men off from the power, purity, and fruitfulness attending their first conversion and engagements unto God, bringing them into habitual declension, at least as to degrees of their holiness and grace. There is not any thing we ought to be more watchful against, if we intend effectually to deal with this powerful and subtle enemy. It is no small part of the wisdom of faith, to observe whatever gospel truths continue to have the same savour unto, and efficacy upon, the soul, as formerly they have had; and whether an endeavour be maintained to improve them continually as at the first. A commandment that is always practised is always new, as John speaks of that of love. And he that really improves gospel truths, though he hears them a thousand times, they will be always new and fresh unto him, because they put him on newness of practice; when to another, that grows common under them, they are burdensome and common unto him, and he even loathes the manna that he is so accustomed to.

(2.) Indwelling sin doth this, by taking men off from their watch against the returns of Satan. When the Lord Christ comes first to take possession of any soul for himself, he binds that strong man, and spoils his goods; he deprives him of all his power, dominion, and interest. Satan being thus dispossessed, and frustrated in his hopes and expectations, leaves the soul, as finding it newly mortified to his baits. So he left our Saviour upon his first fruitless attempts. But it is said, he left him only for a season, Luke iv. 13. He intended to return again, as he should see his advantage. So it is with believers also. Being cast out from his interest in them, he leaves

them for a season; at least comparatively he doth so. Freed from his assaults and perplexing temptations, they proceed vigorously in the course of their obedience, and so flourish in the ways of God. But this holds not; Satan returns again; and if the soul stand not continually upon its guard against him, he will quickly get such advantages as shall put a notable interruption upon its fruitfulness and obedience. Hence some, after they have spent some time, it may be some years, in cheerful exemplary walking with God, have, upon Satan's return, consumed all their latter days in wrestling with perplexing temptations wherewith he hath entangled them. Others have plainly fallen under the power of his assaults. It is like a man who, having for a while lived usefully amongst his neighbours, done good and communicated according to his ability, distributing to the poor and helping all round about him, at length falling into the hands of vexatious, wrangling, oppressive men, he is forced to spend his whole time and revenue in defending himself against them at law, and so becomes useless in the place where he lives. So it is with many a believer. After he hath walked in a fruitful course of obedience, to the glory of God and edification of the church of Christ, being afresh set upon by the return of Satan in one way or other, he hath enough to do all the remainder of his life to keep himself alive; in the mean time, as to many graces, woefully decaying and going backward. Now this also, though Satan hath a hand in it, is from indwelling sin; I mean, the success is so which Satan doth obtain in his undertaking. This encourageth him, maketh way for his return, and gives entrance to his temptations. You know how it is with them out of whom he is cast only by gospel conviction; after he hath wandered and waited a while, he

saith he will return to his house from whence he was ejected. And what is the issue? Carnal lusts have prevailed over the man's convictions, and made his soul fit to entertain returning devils. It is so as to the measure of prevalency that Satan obtains against believers, upon advantages administered unto him by sins disposing the soul unto an obnoxiousness to his temptations.

Now the ways and means whereby indwelling sin doth give advantage to Satan for his return, are all those which dispose believers towards a declension, which shall afterwards be mentioned. Satan is a diligent, watchful, and crafty adversary; he will neglect no opportunity, no advantage that is offered unto him. Wherein then soever our spiritual strength is impaired by sin, or which way soever our lusts press, Satan falls in with that weakness, and presseth towards that ruin. So that all the actings of the law of sin are subservient to this end of Satan. I shall therefore only at present mention one or two, that seem principally to invite Satan to attempt a return.

[1.] It entangleth the soul in the things of the world, all which are so many purveyors of Satan. When Pharaoh had let the people go, he heard after a while that they were entangled in the wilderness, and supposes that he shall therefore now overtake them and destroy them: this stirs him up to pursue after them. Satan, finding those from whom he hath been cast out entangled in the things of the world, by which he is sure to find an easy access unto them, is encouraged to attempt upon them afresh, as the spider to come down upon the strongest fly that is entangled in his web. For he comes by his temptations only to impel them unto that whereunto by their own lusts they are inclined, by adding poison to their lusts, and painting to the objects of them. And oftentimes by

this advantage he gets so in upon the souls of men, that they are never well free of him more whilst they live. And as men's diversions increase from the world, so do their entanglements from Satan. When they have more to do in the world than they can well manage, they shall have more to do with Satan than they can well withstand. When men are made spiritually faint by dealing in and with the world, Satan sets on them, as Amalek did on the faint and weak people that came out of Egypt.

[2.] It produceth this effect by making the soul negligent, and taking it off from its watch. We have before showed at large, that it is one main part of the effectual deceitfulness of indwelling sin, to make the soul inadvertent, to turn it off from the diligent attendance unto its duty which is required. Now there is not any thing in reference to which diligence and watchfulness is more strictly enjoined, than the returning assaults of Satan. "Be sober, be vigilant:" and why so? "because of your adversary the devil," 1 Pet. v. 8. Unless you are exceeding watchful, at one time or other he will surprise you. And all the injunctions of our blessed Saviour to watch, are still with reference to him and his temptations. Now when the soul is made careless and inadvertent, forgetting what an enemy it hath to deal withal, or is lifted up with the successes it hath newly obtained against him, then is Satan's time to attempt a re-entrance of his old habitation; which, if he cannot obtain, yet he makes their lives uncomfortable to themselves and unfruitful to others, in weakening their root and withering their fruit, through his poisoning temptations. He comes down upon our duties of obedience, as the fowls upon Abraham's sacrifice; so that, if we watch not as he did to drive them away, (for by resistance he is overcome and put to flight,) he will devour them.

(3.) Indwelling sin takes advantage by the evil examples of professors among whom they live, to put forth its efficacy and deceit to withdraw men from their primitive zeal and holiness, from their first faith, love, and works. When men first engage in the ways of God, they have a reverent esteem of those whom they believe to have been made partakers of that mercy before themselves; these they love and honour, as it is their duty. But after a while, they find many of them walking in many things unevenly, crookedly, and not unlike the men of the world. Here sin is not wanting to its advantage. Insensibly it prevails with men to a compliance with them. This way, this course of walking, doth well enough with others; why may it not do so with us also? Such is the inward thought of many, that works effectually in them. And so, through the craft of sin, the generation of professors corrupt one another. As a stream arising from a clear spring or fountain, whilst it runs in its own peculiar channel, and keeps its waters unmixed, preserves its purity and cleanness; but when it falls in, in its course, with other streams, which are turbid and foul, though running the same way with it, it becomes muddy and discoloured also: so it is in this case. Believers come forth from the spring of the new birth with some purity and cleanness; this for a while they keep in the course of their private walking with God; but now, when they come sometimes to fall into society with others, whose profession flows and runs the same way with theirs, even towards heaven, but yet are muddied and sullied with sin and the world; they are often corrupted with them and by them, and so decline from their first purity, faith, and holiness. Now, lest this may have been the case of any who shall read this discourse, I shall add some few

cautions that are necessary to preserve men from this infection.

In the body of professors there is a great number of hypocrites. Though we cannot say of this or that man that he is so, yet that some there are is most certain. Our Saviour hath told us that it will be so to the end of the world. All that have oil in their lamps, have it not in their vessels. Let men take heed how they give themselves up unto a conformity to the professors they meet with; lest instead of saints and the best of men, they sometimes propose for their example hypocrites which are the worst; and when they think they are alike unto them who bear the image of God, they conform themselves unto those who bear the image of Satan.

Again, you know not what may be the present temptations of those whose ways you observe. It may be they are under some peculiar desertion from God, and so are withering for a season until he send them some refreshing showers from above. It may be they are entangled with some special corruption that you know not of, which is their burden. And for any voluntarily to fall into such a frame as others are cast into by the power of their temptations, or to think that will suffice in them which they see to suffice in others whose distempers they know not, is folly and presumption. He that knows such or such a person to be a living man and of a healthy constitution, if he see him go crawling up and down about his affairs, feeble and weak, sometimes falling, sometimes standing, and making small progress in any thing, will he think it sufficient for himself to do so also? Will he not inquire whether the person he sees have not lately fallen into some distemper or sickness that hath weakened him, and brought him

into that condition? Assuredly he would so do. Take heed, christians; many of the professors with whom ye converse are sick and wounded; the wounds of some of them do stink and are corrupt because of their folly. If you have any spiritual health, do not think their weak and uneven walking will be accepted at your hands; much less think it will be well for you to become sick and to be wounded also.

Remember also that of many of the best christians the worst only is known and seen. Many who keep up precious communion with God, do yet oftentimes by natural tempers of freedom or passion, not carry so glorious appearances as others, who perhaps come short of them in grace and the power of godliness. In respect of their outward conversation, it may seem they are scarcely saved, when in respect of their faith and love they may be eminent. They may, as the king's daughter, be all glorious within, though their clothes be not always of wrought gold. Take heed then, that you be not infected with their worst, when ye are not able, it may be, to imitate them in their best. But to return.

(4.) Sin doth this work by cherishing some secret particular lust in the heart. This the soul contends against faintly. It contends against it upon the account of sincerity; it cannot but do so; but it doth not make thorough work, vigorously to mortify it by the strength and power of grace. Now where it is thus with a soul, an habitual declension as to holiness will assuredly ensue. David shows us how in his first days he kept his heart close unto God; "I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity," Psa. xviii. 23. His great care was lest any one lust should prevail in him or upon him, that might be called his iniquity in a peculiar manner

The same course steered Paul also, 1 Cor. ix. 27. He was in danger to be lifted up by his spiritual revelations and enjoyments; this makes him keep his body in subjection, that no carnal reasonings or vain imagination might take place in him. But where indwelling sin hath provoked, irritated, and given strength unto a special lust, it proves assuredly a principal means of a general declension. For as an infirmity and weakness in any one vital part will make the whole body consumptive, so will the weakness in any one grace, which a perplexing lust brings with it, make the soul. It every way weakens spiritual strength. It weakens confidence in God in faith and prayer. The knees will be feeble and the hands will hang down in dealing with God, where a galling and unmortified lust lies in the heart. It will take such hold upon the soul, that it shall not be able to look up, Psa. xl. 12. It darkens the mind by innumerable foolish imaginations, which it stirs up to make provision for itself. It galls the conscience with those spots and stains, which, in and by its actings, it brings upon the soul. It contends in the will for rule and dominion. An active, stirring corruption would have the commanding power in the soul, and it is ever and anon ready to take the throne. It disturbs the thoughts, and will sometimes even frighten the soul from dealing with it by meditation, lest, corrupt affections being entangled by it, grace loses ground instead of prevailing. It breaks out oftentimes into scandalous sins, as it did in David and Hezekiah, and loads the sinner with sorrow and discouragement. By these and the like means it becomes to the soul like a moth in a garment, to eat up and devour the strongest threads of it, so that though the whole hang loose together, it is easily torn in

pieces. Though the soul with whom it is thus, do for a season keep up a fair profession, yet his strength is secretly devoured; and every temptation tears and rents his conscience at pleasure. It becomes with such men, as it is with some who have for many years been of a sound, strong, athletic constitution. Some secret hectical distemper seizeth on them; for a season they take no notice of it; or if they do, they think they shall do well enough with it, and easily shake it off when they have a little leisure to attend unto it; but for the present they think, as Samson with his locks cut, they will do as at other times. Sometimes, it may be, they complain that they are not well, they know not what aileth them; and, it may be, rise violently in an opposition to their distemper; but after a while struggling in vain, the vigour of their spirits and strength failing them, they are forced to yield to the power of a consumption. And now all they can do is little enough to keep them alive. It is so with men brought into spiritual decays by any secret perplexing corruptions. It may be they have had a vigorous principle of obedience and holiness: indwelling sin, watching its opportunities, by some temptation or other hath kindled and inflamed some particular lust in them. For a while, it may be, they take little notice of it. Sometimes they complain, but think they will do as in former times; until being insensibly weakened in their spiritual strength, they have work enough to do in keeping alive what remains and is ready to die. I shall not add any thing here as to the preventing and obviating this advantage of indwelling sin, having elsewhere treated of it peculiarly and apart.

(5.) It works by negligence of private communion with God in prayer and meditation. I have shown

before how indwelling sin puts forth its deceitfulness, in diverting the soul from watchfulness in and unto these duties. Here if it prevails, it will not fail to induce an habitual declension in the whole course of obedience. All neglect of private duties is principled by a weariness of God, as he complaineth, "thou hast not called upon me, thou hast been weary of me," Isa. xliii. 22. Neglect of invocation proceeds from weariness; and where there is weariness, there will be withdrawing from that whereof we are weary. Now God alone being the fountain and spring of spiritual life, if there be weariness of him, and withdrawing from him, it is impossible but that there will a decay in the life ensue. Indeed what men are in these duties, I mean as to faith and love in them, that they are and no more. Here lies the root of their obedience, and if this fail, all fruit will quickly fail. You may sometimes see a tree flourishing with leaves and fruit, goodly and pleasant. After a while the leaves begin to decay, the fruit to wither, the whole to droop. Search, and you shall find that the root, whereby it should draw in moisture and fatness from the earth, to supply the body and branches with sap and juice for growth and fruit, hath received a wound, is some way perished, doth not perform its duty; so that though the branches are flourishing a while with what they had received, their sustenance being intercepted, they must decay. So it is here. These duties of private communion with God, are the means of receiving supplies of spiritual strength from him, of sap and fatness from Christ, the vine and olive. Whilst they do so, the conversation and course of obedience flourish and are fruitful, and outward duties are cheerfully and regularly performed. But if there be a wound, a defect, a failing in that which should

first take in the spiritual radical moisture that should be communicated unto the whole, the rest may for a season maintain their station and appearance, but after a while profession will wither, fruits will decay, and the whole be ready to die. Hence our Saviour lets us know, that what a man is in secret, in these private duties, that he is in the eyes of God, and no more, Matt. vi. 6. And one reason amongst others is, because they have a more vigorous acting of unmixed grace than any other duties whatever. In all or most particular duties, besides the influence that they may have from carnal respects, which are many, and the ways of their insinuation subtile and imperceptible, there is an alloy of gifts which sometimes even devours the pure gold of grace which should be the chief and principle in them. In these there is immediate intercourse between God, and that which is of himself in the soul. If once sin, by its deceits and treacheries, prevail to take off the soul from diligent attendance unto communion with God, and constancy in these duties, it will not fail to effect a declining in the whole of a man's obedience. It hath made its entrance, and will assuredly make good its progress.

(6.) Growing in notions of truth without answerable practice, is another thing that indwelling sin makes use of to bring the souls of believers under a decay. The apostle tells us, that "knowledge puffeth up," 1 Cor. viii. 1. If it be alone, not improved in practice, it swells men beyond a due proportion: like a man that hath a dropsy, we are not to expect that he hath strength to his bigness: like trees that are continually running up a head, which keeps them from bearing fruit. When once men have attained to this, that they can entertain and receive evangelical truths in a new and more glorious light, or more clear

discovery than formerly, or new manifestations of truth which they knew not before, and please themselves in so doing, without diligent endeavours to have the power of those truths and notions upon their hearts, and their souls made conformable unto them; they generally learn so to dispose of all truths formerly known, which were sometimes inlaid in their hearts with more efficacy and power. This hath proved, if not the ruin, yet the great impairing of many in these days of light wherein we live. By this means, from humble close walking, many have withered into an empty, barren, talking profession. All things almost have in a short season become alike unto them: whether they have been true or false, so they may be debating of them and disputing about them, all is well. This is food for sin; it hatcheth it, increaseth it, and is increased by it. A notable way it is for the vanity that is in the mind to exert itself without a rebuke from conscience. Whilst men are talking, and writing, and studying about religion, and hearing preaching it may be with great delight, as those in Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 32, conscience, unless thoroughly awake and circumspect, and furnished with spiritual wisdom and care, will be very well pacified, and enter no rebukes or pleas against the way that the soul is in. But yet all this may be nothing but the acting of that natural vanity which lies in the mind, and is a principal part of the sin we treat of. And generally this is so when men content themselves, as was said, with the notions of truth, without labouring after an experience of the power of them in their hearts, and the bringing forth the fruit of them in their lives, on which a decay must needs ensue.

(7.) Growth in carnal wisdom is another help to sin in producing this sad effect. "Thy wisdom and

thy knowledge," saith the prophet, "hath perverted thee," Isa. xlvii. 10. So much as carnal wisdom increaseth, so much faith decays. The proper work of it, is to teach a man to trust to and in himself; of faith, to trust wholly in another. So it labours to destroy the whole work of faith, by causing the soul to return into a deceiving fulness of his own. We have woeful examples of the prevalency of this principle of declension in the days wherein we live. How many a poor, humble, broken-hearted creature, who followed after God in simplicity and integrity of spirit, have we seen, through the observation of the ways and walkings of others, and closing with the temptations to craft and subtlety which opportunities in the world have administered unto them, come to be dipped in a worldly, carnal frame, and utterly to wither in their profession. Many are so sullied hereby, that they are not to be known to be the men they were.

(8.) Some great sin lying long in the heart and conscience unrepented of, or not repented of as it ought and as the matter requires, furthers indwelling sin in this work. The great turn of the life of David, whence his first ways carried their reputation, was in the harbouring his great sin in his conscience without suitable repentance. It was otherwise we know with Peter, and he had another issue. A great sin will certainly give a great turn to the life of a professor. If it be well cured in the blood of Christ, with that humiliation which the gospel requires, it often proves a means of more watchfulness, fruitfulness, humility, and contentment, than ever the soul before obtained. If it be neglected, it certainly hardens the heart, weakens spiritual strength, enfeebles the soul, discouraging it unto all communion with God, and is a

notable principle of a general decay. So David complains; "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness," Psa. xxxviii. 5. His present distemper was not so much from his sin as his folly; not so much from the wounds he had received, as from his neglect to make a timely application for their cure. It is like a broken bone, which, being well set, leaves the place stronger than before; if otherwise, makes the man a cripple all his days. These things we do but briefly name; and sundry other advantages of the like nature, that sin makes use of to produce this effect, might also be instanced; but these may suffice unto our present purpose. Whatever it useth, itself is still the principle; and this is no small demonstration of its efficacy and power.

CHAPTER XVI.

The strength of indwelling sin manifested from its power and effects in persons unregenerate.

It is of the power and efficacy of indwelling sin, as it remains in several degrees in believers, that we are treating. Now I have elsewhere shown, that the nature and all the natural properties of it, do still remain in them. Though, therefore, we cannot prove directly what is the strength of sin in them from what its power is in those in whom it is only checked and not at all weakened; yet we may, from an observation thereof, caution believers of the real power of that mortal enemy with whom they have to do.

If the plague do violently rage in one city, destroying multitudes; and there be in another an infection of the same kind, which yet arises not unto that height

and fury there, by reason of the correction that it meets with from a better air and remedies used; yet a man may demonstrate unto the inhabitants, the source and danger of that infection got in among them, by the effects that it hath and doth produce among others who have not the benefit of the preventives and preservatives which they enjoy: which will teach them both to value the means of their preservation, and be the more watchful against the power of the infection that is amongst them. It is so in this case. Believers may be taught what is the power and efficacy of that plague of sin which is in and among them, by the effects the same plague produceth in and among others, who have not those corrections of its poison, and those preservatives from death, which the Lord Jesus hath furnished them withal.

Having then fixed on the demonstration of the power of sin from the effects it doth produce, and having given a double instance hereof in believers themselves, I shall now further evidence the same truth, or pursue the same evidence of it, by showing somewhat of the power that it hath in them who are unregenerate, and so have not the remedies against it with which believers are furnished.

I shall not handle the whole power of sin in unregenerate persons, which is a very large field, and not the business I have in hand; but only, by some few instances of its effects in them, intimate, as I said, unto believers, what they have to deal withal.

I. Then, it appears in the violence it offers to the nature of men, compelling them unto sins fully contrary to all the principles of the reasonable nature wherewith they are endued from God. Every creature of God hath, in its creation, a law of operation implanted in it, which is the rule of all that proceed-

eth from it, of all that it doth of its own accord. So the fire ascends upwards, bodies that are weighty and heavy descend, the water flows; each according to the principles of their nature, which give them the law of their operation. That which hinders them in their operation is force and violence, as that which hinders a stone from descending, or the fire from going upwards. That which forceth them to move contrary to the law of their nature, as a stone to go upwards, or the fire to descend, is in its kind the greatest violence, of which the degrees are endless. Now, that which should take a great millstone, and fling it upwards in the air, all would acknowledge to be a matter of wondrous force, power, and efficacy.

Man also hath his law of operation and working, concreated with him. And this may be considered two ways; either, first, as it is common to him with other creatures; or, as peculiar, with reference to that special end for which he was created. Some things in this law of nature are, I say, common to man with other creatures; as, to nourish their young, to live quietly with those of the same kind and race with them, to seek and follow after that which is good for them in that state and condition wherein they are created. These are things which all brute living creatures have in the law of their nature, as man also hath.

But now, besides these things, man being created in an especial manner to give glory to God by rational and moral obedience, and so to obtain a reward in the enjoyment of him, there are many things in the law of his creation that are peculiar to him; as, to love God above all, to seek the enjoyment of him as his chiefest good and last end, to inquire after his mind and will, and to yield obedience, and the like; all which are part of the law of his nature.

Now these things are not distinguished so, as though a man might perform the actions of the law of his nature which are common to him with other creatures, merely from the principles of his nature, as they do; but also, the law of his dependence upon God, and doing all things in obedience unto him, passeth on them all. He can never be considered as a mere creature, but as a creature made for the glory of God by rational, moral obedience; rational, because by him chosen, and performed with reason; and moral, because regulated by a law whereunto reason doth attend.

For instance; it is common to man, with other creatures, to take care for the nourishing of his children, of the young helpless ones that receive their being by him. There is implanted in him, concreated with the principles of his nature, a love and care for them; so it is with other living creatures. Now if other creatures answer this instinct and inclination, and be not hardened against them like the foolish ostrich, unto whom God hath not imparted this natural wisdom, (Job xxxix. 16, 17,) they fully answer the law of their creation. With man it is not so: it is not enough for him to answer the instinct and secret impulse and inclination of his nature and kind, as in the nourishing of his children; but he must do it also in subjection to God, and obey him therein, and do it unto his glory; the law of moral obedience passing over all his whole being and all his operations. But in these things lies, as it were, the whole of a man; namely, in the things which are implanted in his nature as a creature, common to him with all other living creatures; seconded by the command or will of God, as he is a creature capable of yielding moral obedience, and doing all things for his glory.

That, then, which shall drive and compel a man

to transgress this law of his nature; which is not only as if to throw millstones upward, to drive beasts from taking care of their young, to take from cattle of the same kind the herding of themselves in quietness, but moreover to cast off what lies in him, his fundamental dependence on God as a creature made to yield him obedience; must needs be esteemed of great force and efficacy.

Now this is frequently done by indwelling sin in persons unregenerate. Let us take some few instances.

1. There is nothing that is more deeply inlaid in the principles of the natures of all living creatures, and so of man himself, than a love unto, and a care for, the preservation and nourishing of their young. Many brute creatures will die for them; some feed them with their own flesh and blood; all deprive themselves of that food which nature directs them to as their best, to impart it to them; and act in their behalf to the utmost of their power.

Now such is the efficacy, power, and force, of indwelling sin in man, an infection that the nature of other creatures knows nothing of, that in many it prevails to stop this fountain, to beat back the stream of natural affections, to root up the principles of the law of nature, and to drive them unto a neglect, a destruction of the fruit of their own loins. Paul tells us of the old gentiles, that they were "without natural affection," Rom. i. 31. That which he aims at is that barbarous custom among the romans, who ofttimes, to spare the trouble in the education of their children, and to be at liberty to satisfy their lusts, destroyed their own children from the womb. So far did the strength of sin prevail to obliterate the law of nature, and to repel the force and power of it.

Examples of this nature are common in all nations;

amongst ourselves, of women murdering their own children through the deceitful reasoning of sin. And herein sin turns the strong current of nature, darkens all the light of God in the soul, controls all natural principles, strengthened by the power of the command and will of God. But yet this evil hath, through the efficacy of sin, received a fearful aggravation. Men have not only slain, but cruelly sacrificed, their children to satisfy their lusts. The apostle reckons idolatry, and so consequently all superstition, among the "works of the flesh," that is, the fruit and product of indwelling sin, Gal. v. 19, 20. Now from hence it is that men have offered that horrid and unspeakable violence to the law of nature mentioned. So the psalmist tells us, Psa. cvi. 37, 38. The same is again mentioned in Ezek. xvi. 20, 21, and in sundry other places of Scripture. The whole manner of that abomination I have elsewhere declared. For the present it may suffice to intimate, that they took their children and burnt them to ashes in a soft fire; the wicked priests that assisted in the sacrifice, affording them this relief, that they made a noise and clamour that the vile wretches might not hear the woeful moans and cries of the poor dying, tormented infants. I suppose in this case we need no further evidence. Naturalists can give no rational account of, they can only admire the secret force of that little fish, which, they say, will stop a ship in full sail in the midst of the sea. And we must acknowledge, that it is beyond our power to give an account of the secret force and unsearchable deceit that is in this inbred traitor sin, that can not only stop the course of nature, when all the sails that carry it forward are so filled as they are in affections to children, but also drive it back with such a violence and force, as to cause men to deal with

their own children as a good man would not be hired with any reward to deal with his dog. And it may not be to the disadvantage of the best to know and consider, that they carry that about them and in them, which in others hath produced these effects.

2. The like may be spoken of all other sins against the prime dictates of the law of nature, that mankind are or have been stained and defamed withal. Murder of parents and children, of wives and husbands; sodomy, incest, and the like enormities; in all which sin prevails in men against the whole law of their being and dependence upon God.

Why should I reckon up the murder of Cain and Abel, the treason of Judas, with their aggravations; or recount the filth and villany of Nero, in whom sin seemed to design an instance of what it could abase the nature of man unto? In a word, all the studied, premeditated perjuries; all the designed, bloody revenges; all the filth and uncleanness; all the enmity to God and his ways that is in the world; is fruit growing from this root alone.

II. It evidences its efficacy in keeping men off from believing under the dispensation of the gospel. This evidence must be a little further cleared.

1. Under the dispensation of the gospel, there are but few that do believe. So the preachers of it complain, "who hath believed our report," Isa. liii. 1; which the apostle interprets of the paucity of believers, John xii. 38. Our Saviour Christ himself tells us that "many are called," (the word is preached unto many,) "but few are chosen." And so the church complains of its number, Mic. vii. 1. Few there be who enter the narrow gate; daily experience confirms this woeful observation. How many villages, parishes, yea, towns, may we go unto, where the gospel it

may be hath been preached many years, and perhaps scarce meet a true believer in them, and one who shows forth the death of Christ in his conversation. In the best places, and most eminent for profession, are not such persons like the berries after the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three in the top of the uppermost boughs, and four or five in the highest branches.

2. There is proposed to men in the preaching of the gospel, as motives unto believing, every thing in conjunction that severally prevail with men to do whatever else they do in their lives. Whatever any one doth with consideration, he doth it either because it is reasonable and good for him so to do, or profitable and advantageous, or pleasant, or, lastly, necessary for the avoidance of evil. Whatever, I say, men do with consideration, whether it be good or evil, whether it be in the works of this life, or in things that lead to another, they do it from one or other of the reasons or motives mentioned; and, God knows, ofttimes they are very poor and mean in their kind that men are prevailed upon by. How often will men, for a very little pleasure, a very little profit, be induced to do that which shall imbitter their lives, and damn their souls! And what industry will they use, to avoid that which they apprehend to be evil or grievous to them! And any one of these is enough to oil the wheel of men's utmost endeavours, and set men at work to the purpose.

But now, all these things centre in the proposal of the gospel, and the command of believing; and every one of them in a kind that the whole world can propose nothing like unto it.

It is the most reasonable thing that can be proposed to the understanding of a man, that he who, through his own default, hath lost that way he was first placed in, of

bringing glory to God and saving his own soul, for which ends he was made, should accept of and embrace that other blessed, easy, safe, excellent way for the attaining of the ends mentioned, which God in infinite grace, love, mercy, wisdom, and righteousness, hath found out, and doth propose unto him. And,

It is the most profitable thing that a man can possibly be invited unto; if there be any profit or benefit, any advantage in the forgiveness of sins, in the love and favour of God, in a blessed immortality, in eternal glory. And,

It is most pleasant also. Surely it is a pleasant thing to be brought out of darkness into light, out of a dungeon unto a throne; from captivity and slavery to Satan and cursed lusts, to the glorious liberty of the children of God; with a thousand heavenly sweetnesses not now to be mentioned. And,

It is surely necessary, and that not only from the command of God, who hath the supreme authority over us, but also indispensably so for the avoidance of eternal ruin of body and soul, Mark xvi. 16. It is constantly proposed under these terms, Believe, or you perish under the weight of the wrath of the great God, and that for evermore.

But now, notwithstanding that all these considerations are preached unto men, and pressed upon them in the name of the great God, from day to day, from one year to another, yet, as was before observed, very few there are who set their hearts unto them, so as to embrace that which they lead to. Tell men ten thousand times that this is wisdom, yea, riches; that all their profit lies in it; that they will assuredly and eternally perish, and that, it may be, within a few hours, if they receive not the gospel; assure them that

it is their only interest and concernment; let them know that God himself speaks all this unto them; yet, all is one, they regard it not, set not their hearts unto it, but as it were plainly say, we will have nothing to do with these things. They will rather perish in their lusts than accept of mercy.

3. It is indwelling sin, and that alone, that both disenableth men unto, and hinders them from, believing. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellences; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; senseless, and take no notice of their own eternal concernments.

Now certainly that which can prevail with men, wise, and sober, and prudent in other things, to neglect and despise the love of God, the blood of Christ, the eternal welfare of their own souls, upon weak and worthless pretences, must be acknowledged to have an astonishing force and efficacy accompanying it.

Whose heart, who hath once heard of the ways of God, can but bleed to see poor souls eternally perishing under a thousand gracious invitations to accept of mercy and pardon in the blood of Christ? And can we but be astonished at the power of that principle from whence it is that they run headlong to their own destruction? And yet all this befalls them from the power and deceit of sin that dwelleth in them.

III. It is evident in their total apostasies. Many men, not really converted, are much wrought upon by the word. The apostle tells us, that they do "clean escape from them who live in error," 2 Pet. ii. 18. They separate themselves from idolatry and

false worship, owning and professing the truth; and they also escape "the pollutions of the world," ver. 20; that is, the "corruption that is in the world through lust," as he expresseth it, chap. i. 4; those filthy, corrupt, and unclean ways, which the men of the world, in the pursuit of their lusts, do walk and live in. These they escape from, in the amendment of their lives, and ordering of their conversation according to the convictions which they have from the word. For so he tells us, that all this is brought about through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is, by the preaching of the gospel. They are so far wrought upon as to forsake all ways of false worship, to profess the truth, to reform their lives, and to walk answerably to the convictions that are upon them.

By this means do they gain the reputation of professors; they have a name to live, Rev. iii. 1; and are made partakers of some or all of those privileges of the gospel that are numbered by the apostle, Heb. vi. 4, 5.

It is not my present business to show how far, or wherein, a man may be effectually wrought upon by the word, and yet not be really wrought over to close with Christ; or what may be the utmost bounds and limits of a common work of grace upon unregenerate men. It is on all hands confessed, that it may be carried on so far, that it is very difficult to discern between its effects and productions and those of that grace which is special and saving.

But now, notwithstanding all this, we see many of these daily fall off from God, utterly and wickedly; some into debauchery and uncleanness, some to worldliness and covetousness, some to be persecutors of the saints, all to the perdition of their own souls. How

this comes about, the apostle declares in that place mentioned; they are, saith he, "entangled again." To entice and entangle, as I have showed before from James i. 14, 15, is the proper working of indwelling sin; it is that alone which entangles the soul. They are allured from their whole profession, into cursed apostasy, through the lusts of the flesh.

It prevails upon them through its deceit and power to an utter relinquishment of their profession, and their whole engagement unto God; and this, several ways, evinces the greatness of its strength and efficacy.

1. In that it giveth stop or control unto that exceeding greatness of power, which is put forth in the word in their conviction and reformation. We see it by experience that men are not easily wrought upon by the word; the most of men can live under the dispensation of it all the days of their lives, and continue as senseless and stupid as the seats they sit upon, or the flint in the rock of stone. Mighty difficulties and prejudices must be conquered, great strokes must be given to the conscience, before this can be brought about. It is as the stopping of a river in his course, and turning his streams another way; the hindering of a stone in its falling downwards, or the turning away of a wild ass when furiously set to pursue his way, as the prophet speaks, Jer. ii. 24. To turn men from their corrupt ways, sins, and pleasures; to make them willingly and gladly fast, pray, hear, and do many things contrary to the principle of flesh, which is secretly predominant in them; to cause them to profess Christ and the gospel, it may be under some trials and reproaches; to give them light to see into sundry mysteries and gifts, for the discharge of sundry duties; to make dead, blind, senseless men to walk, and talk,

and do all the outward offices and duties of living and healthy men; with the like attendances of conviction and reformation; are the effects and products of mighty power and strength. Indeed, the power that the Holy Ghost puts forth by the word, in the staggering and conviction of sinners, in the awakening of their consciences, the enlightening of their minds, the changing of their affections, the aweing of their hearts, the reforming of their lives, and compelling them to duties, is inexpressible.

But now, unto all these is there check and control given by indwelling sin. It prevails against this whole work of the Spirit by the word, with all the advantages of providential dispensations, in afflictions and mercies, wherewith it is attended. When sin is once enraged, all things become but like the withs and cords wherewith Samson was bound before his head was shaven: cry but to it, "the philistines are upon thee;" here is a subtle, a suitable temptation, now show thy strength and efficacy; all these become like tow that has smelt the fire. Conscience is stifled, reputation in the church of God despised, light supplanted, the impressions of the word cast off, convictions digested, heaven and hell are despised; sin makes its way through all, and utterly turns the soul from the good and right ways of God. Sometimes it doth this subtlely, by imperceptible degrees; taking off all force of former impressions from the Spirit by the word, sullying conscience by degrees, hardening the heart, and making sensual the affections by various workings; so that the poor backslider in heart scarce knows what he is doing, until he be come to the very bottom of all impiety, profaneness, and enmity against God. Sometimes, falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it suddenly,

and at once, plunges the soul into a course of alienation from God and the profession of his ways.

2. It takes them off from those hopes of heaven which, upon their convictions, obedience, and temporary faith or believing, they had obtained. There is a general hope of heaven, or at least of the escaping of hell, of an untroublesome immortality, in the most sottish and stupid souls in the world, who, either by tradition or instruction from the word, are persuaded that there is another state of things to come after this life: but it is, in unconvinced, unenlightened persons, a dull, senseless, unaffecting thing, that hath no other hold upon them, nor power in them, but only to keep them free from the trouble and perplexity of contrary thoughts and apprehensions. The matter is otherwise with them who, by the word, are so wrought upon as we have before declared. Their hope of heaven and a blessed immortality, is ofttimes accompanied with great joys and exultations, and is a relief unto them under and against the worst of their fears and trials; it is such as they would not part with for all the world; and upon all occasions they retreat in their minds unto it for comfort and relief.

Now all this, by the power of sin, are they prevailed withal to forego. Let heaven go if it will; a blessed immortality, with the enjoyment of God himself; sin must be served, and provision made to fulfil the lusts thereof.

If a man, in the things of this world, had such a hope of a large inheritance, of a kingdom, as that he is satisfied it will not fail him, but that in the issue he shall surely enjoy it, and lead a happy and a glorious life in the possession of it, many days: if one should go to him and tell him, It is true, the kingdom you look for is an ample and honourable domi-

nion, full of all good things desirable, and you may attain it; but come, cast away all hopes and expectations of it, and come join with me in the service and slavery of such or such an oppressive tyrant: you easily grant, he must have some strange bewitching power with him, that should prevail with a man in his wits to follow his advice.

Yet thus it is, and much more so, in the case we have in hand. Sin itself cannot deny, but that the kingdom of heaven, which the soul is in hope and expectation of, is glorious and excellent; nor doth it go about to convince him that his thoughts of it are vain, and such as will deceive him; but plainly prevails with him to cast away his hopes, to despise his kingdom that he was in expectation of, and that upon no other motive, but that he may serve some worldly, cruel, or filthy and sensual lust. Certainly here lies a secret efficacy, whose depths cannot be fathomed.

3. The apostle manifests the power of the entanglements of sin in and upon apostates, in that it turns them off from "the way of righteousness after they have known it," 2 Pet. ii. 21. It will be found at the last day an evil thing and a bitter, that men live all their days in the service of sin, self, and the world, refusing to make any trial of the ways of God whereunto they are invited. Though they have no experience of their excellency, beauty, pleasantness, and safety, yet having evidence brought unto them from God himself that they are so, the refusal of them will, I say, be bitterness in the latter end. But their condition is yet far worse, who, as the apostle speaks, having known the way of righteousness, are, by the power of indwelling sin, turned aside from the holy commandment. To leave God for the devil, after a man hath made some trial of him and his service!

heaven for hell, after a man hath had some cheering, refreshing thoughts of it; the fellowship of the saints for an ale-house or a brothel-house, after a man hath been admitted unto their communion, and tasted of the pleasantness of it; to leave walking in pure, clear, straight paths, to wallow in mire, draughts, and filth; this will be for a lamentation. Yet unto this doth sin prevail upon apostates, and that against all their light, conviction, experiences, professions, engagements, or whatever may be strong upon them to keep them up to the known ways of righteousness.

4. It evinces its strength in them by prevailing with them unto a total renunciation of God as revealed in Christ, and the power of all gospel truth, in the sin against the Holy Ghost. I do not now precisely determine what is the sin against the Holy Ghost, nor wherein it doth consist. There are different apprehensions of it: all agree in this, that by it an end is put to all dealings between God and man in a way of grace. It is a sin unto death. And this doth the hardness and blindness of men's hearts bring them to; they are by them at length set out of the reach of mercy. They choose to have no more to do with God, and God swears that they shall never enter into his rest. So sin brings forth death. A man by it is brought to renounce the end for which he was made; wilfully to reject the means of his coming to the enjoyment of God; to provoke him to his face, and so to perish in his rebellion.

I have not mentioned these things, as though I hoped by them to set out to the full the power of indwelling sin in unregenerate men; only by a few instances I thought to give a glimpse of it. He that would have a fuller view of it, had need only to open his eyes to take a little view of that wickedness which

reigneth, yea, rageth all the world over. Let him consider the prevailing flood of the things mentioned by Paul to be "the fruits of the flesh," Gal. v. 19—21, that is, among the sons of men, in all places, nations, cities, towns, parishes; and then let him add thereunto but this one consideration, that the world, which is full of the steam, filth, and blood of these abominations as to their outward actings of them, is a pleasant garden, a paradise, compared to the heart of man, wherein they are all conceived, with hourly millions of more vile abominations, which, being stifled in the womb by some of the ways before insisted on, they are never able to bring forth to light. Let a man, I say, using the law for his light and rule, take this course, and if he have any spiritual discerning, he may quickly attain satisfaction in this matter.

And I showed, in the entrance of this discourse, how this consideration doth fully confirm the truth proposed.

CHAPTER XVII.

The strength of sin evidenced from its resistance unto the power of the law.

THE measure of the strength of any person or defenced city, may be well taken from the opposition that they are able to withstand, and not be prevailed against. If we hear of a city that hath endured a long siege from a potent enemy, and yet is not taken or conquered, whose walls have endured great batteries and are not demolished, though we have never seen the place, yet we conclude it strong, if not impregnable.

And this consideration will also evidence the power

and strength of indwelling sin: it is able to hold out, and not only to live, but also to secure its reign and dominion, against very strong opposition that is made unto it.

I shall instance only in the opposition that is made to it by the law, which is ofttimes great and terrible, always fruitless; all its assaults are borne by it, and it is not prevailed against.

I. There are sundry things wherein the law opposeth itself to sin, and the power of it. As,

1. It discovers it. Sin in the soul is like a secret hectical distemper in the body; its being unknown and unperceived, is one great means of its prevalency. Or, it is as traitors in a civil state; whilst they lie hid, they vigorously carry on their design. The greatest part of men in the world know nothing of this sickness, yea, death of their souls. Though they have been taught somewhat of the doctrine of it, yet they know nothing of its power. They know it not so as to deal with it as their mortal enemy; as a man, whatever he be told, cannot be said to know that he hath a hectical fever, if he love his life, and set not himself to stop its progress.

This then the law doth; it discovers this enemy; it convinceth the soul that there is such a traitor harbouring in his bosom; "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet," Rom. vii. 7. I had not known it; that is, fully, clearly, distinctly. Conscience will somewhat tumultuate about it, but a man cannot know it clearly and distinctly from hence. It gives a man such a sight of it, as the blind man had in the gospel upon the first touch of his eyes; he saw men like trees walking, obscurely, confusedly: but when the law comes, that gives the soul a distinc

sight of this indwelling sin. Again, I had not known it, that is, the depths of it, the root, the habitual inclination of my nature to sin, which is here called lust, as it is by James, chap. i. 14; had not known it, or not known it to be sin, but by the law.

This then the law doth, it draws out this traitor from its secret lurking-places, the intimate recesses of the soul. A man, when the law comes, is no more ignorant of his enemy; if he will now perish by him, it is openly and knowingly: he cannot but say that the law warned him of him, discovered him unto him, yea, and raised a concourse about him in the soul, of various affections, as an officer doth that discovers a thief or robber, calling out for assistance to apprehend him.

2. The law not only discovers sin, but discovers it to be a very bad inmate, dangerous, yea, pernicious to the soul. "Was then that which is good," that is, the law, "made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful," Rom. vii. 13. There are many things in this verse wherein we are not at present concerned: that only which I aim at, is the manifestation of sin by the law. It appears to be sin; and by the manifestation of it in its own colours, it appears to be exceeding sinful. The law gives the soul to know the filth and guilt of this indwelling sin, how great they are, how vile it is; what an abomination, what an enmity to God, how hated of him! The soul shall never more look upon it as a small matter, what thoughts soever it had of it before, whereby it is greatly surprised.

As a man that finds himself somewhat distempered, sending for a physician of skill, when he comes,

requires his judgment of his distemper. He, considering his condition, tells him, Alas, I am sorry for you; the case is far otherwise with you than you imagine; your disease is mortal, and it hath proceeded so far, pressing upon your spirits, and infecting the whole mass of your blood, that I doubt, unless most effectual remedies be used, you will live but a very few hours. So it is in this case; a man may have some trouble in his mind and conscience about indwelling sin; he finds all not well, as it should be with him, more from the effects of sin, and its continual eruptions, than the nature of it, which he hopes to wrestle withal. But now, when the law comes, it lets the soul know that its disease is deadly and mortal, that it is exceeding sinful, as being the root and cause of all his alienation from God. And thus also the law proceeds against it.

3. The law judgeth the person, or lets the sinner plainly know what he is to expect upon the account of this sin. This is the law's proper work; its discovering property is but preparative to its judging. The law is itself, when it is in the throne. Here it minceth not the matter with sinners, as we use to do one with another, but tells us plainly, Thou art the man, in whom this exceeding sinful sin doth dwell, and you must answer for the guilt of it. And this, methinks, if any thing, should rouse up a man to set himself in opposition to it, yea, utterly to destroy it. The law lets him know, that upon the account of this sin he is obnoxious to the curse and wrath of the great God against him: yea, it pronounceth the sentence of everlasting condemnation upon him on that account; abide in this state and perish, is its language. It leaves not the soul without this warning in this world, and will leave it without excuse on that account in the world to come.

4. The law so follows on its sentence, that it disquiets and affrights the soul, and suffers it not to enjoy the least rest or quietness in harbouring its sinful inmate. Whenever the soul hath given indulgence to its commands, made provision for it, immediately the law flies upon it with the wrath and terror of the Lord, makes it quake and tremble; it shall have no rest, but is like a poor beast that hath a deadly arrow sticking in its sides, that makes it restless wherever it is, and whatever it doth.

5. The law stays not here, but also it slays the soul, Rom. vii. 9; that is, by its convictions of the nature, power, and desert of this indwelling sin, it deprives him in whom it is, of all that life of self-righteousness and hope which formerly he sustained himself withal; it leaves him a poor, dead, helpless, hopeless creature; and all this in the pursuit of that opposition that it makes against this sin.

II. May we not now expect, that the power of it would be quelled, and strength broken; that it will die away before these strokes of the law of God? But the truth is, such is its power and strength, that it is quite otherwise. Like him whom the poets feign to be born of the earth, when one thought to slay him by casting him on the ground, by every fall he recovered new strength, and was more vigorous than formerly; so it is with all the falls and repulses that are given to indwelling sin by the law. For,

1. It is not conquered. A conquest infers two things in respect of the conquered; first, loss of dominion, and, secondly, loss of strength. Wherever any one is conquered, he is despoiled of both these; he loseth both his authority and his power. So the strong man armed, being prevailed against, is bound, and his goods are spoiled. But now, neither of these

befalls indwelling sin by the assaults of the law; it loseth not one jot of its dominion nor strength by all the blows that are given unto it. The law cannot do this thing, Rom. viii. 3. It cannot deprive sin of its power and dominion, for he that is under the law is also under sin; that is, whatever power the law gets upon the conscience of a man, so that he fears to sin, lest the sentence and curse of it should befall him, yet sin still reigns and rules in his heart. Therefore, saith the apostle, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14; intimating plainly, that though a person be in never so much subjection to the authority of the law, yet that will not exempt and acquit him from the dominion of sin. Yea, the law by all its work upon the soul, instead of freeing and acquitting it from the reign of sin and bondage unto it, doth accidentally greatly increase its misery and bondage; as the sentence of the judge on the bench against a malefactor adds to his misery. The soul is under the dominion of sin, and it may be abides in its woeful condition in much security, fearing neither sin nor judgment. The law setting upon him in this condition by all the ways before-mentioned, brings him into great trouble and perplexity, fear and terror, but delivers him not at all. So that it is with the soul as it was with the israelites when Moses had delivered his message unto Pharaoh, they were so far from getting liberty by it that their bondage was increased, and they found that they were in a very evil case, Exod. v. 19. Yea, and we shall see that sin doth like Pharaoh; finding its rule disturbed, it grows more outrageously oppressive, and doubles the bondage of their souls. This is not then the work of the law, to destroy sin, or deprive it of that dominion which it hath by nature.

Nor doth it by all these strokes of the law lose any thing of its strength. It continues both its authority and its force; it is neither destroyed, nor weakened. Yea,

2. It is so far from being conquered, that it is only enraged. The whole work of the law doth only provoke and enrage sin, and cause it, as it hath opportunity, to put out its strength with more power, and vigour, and force than formerly. This the apostle shows at large, Rom. vii. 9—13.

But you will say, Do we not see it by experience, that many are wrought upon by the preaching of the law to a relinquishment of many sins, and amendment of their lives, and to a great contending against the eruptions of those other corruptions which they cannot yet mortify? and it cannot be denied, but that great is the power and efficacy of the law, when preached and applied to the conscience in a due manner. I answer,

1. It is acknowledged, that very great and effectual is the power of the law of God. Great are the effects that are wrought by it; and it shall surely accomplish every end for which, of God, it is appointed. But yet the subduing of sin is none of its work; it is not designed of God unto that purpose; and therefore it is no dishonour if it cannot do that which is not its proper work, Rom. viii. 3.

2. Whatever effects it have upon some, yet we see that in the most, such is the power and prevalency of sin, that it makes no impression at all upon them. May you not see, every where, men living many years in congregations where the law is powerfully preached, and applied unto the consciences as to all the ends and purposes for which the Lord is pleased to make use of it, and not once be moved by it, nor receive

any more impression from the strokes of it than blows with a straw would give to an adamant? They are neither convinced by it, nor terrified, nor awed, nor instructed; but continue deaf, ignorant, senseless, secure, as if they had never been told of the guilt of sin, or terror of the Lord. Congregations are full of such as these, who proclaim the triumphing power of sin over the dispensation of the law.

3. When any of the effects mentioned are wrought, it is not from the power of the letter of the law, but from the actual efficacy of the Spirit of God, putting forth its virtue and power for that end and purpose: and we deny not but that the Spirit of the Lord is able to restrain and quell the power of lust when he pleaseth; and some ways whereby he is pleased so to do, we have formerly considered. But,

4. Notwithstanding all that may be observed of the power of the law upon the souls of men, yet it is most evident that lust is not conquered, nor subdued, nor mortified by it. For,

(1.) Though the course of sin may be repelled for a season by the dispensation of the law, yet the spring and fountain of it is not dried up thereby. Though it withdraws and hides itself for a season, it is, as I have elsewhere showed, but to shift out of a storm, and then to return again. As a traveller, in his way meeting with a violent storm of thunder and rain, immediately turns out of his way to some house or tree for his shelter, but yet this causeth him not to give over his journey, and so soon as the storm is over he returns to his way and progress again; so it is with men in bondage unto sin. They are in a course of pursuing their lusts; the law meets with them in a storm of thunder and lightning from heaven; terrifies and hinders them in their way; this turns them for a

season out of their course; they will run to prayer or amendment of life, for some shelter from the storm of wrath, which they fear is coming upon their consciences. But is their course stopped? are their principles altered? Not at all. So soon as the storm is over, so that they begin to wear out that sense and the terror that was upon them, they return to their former course in the service of sin again. This was the state with Pharaoh once and again.

(2.) In such seasons sin is not conquered, but diverted. When it seems to fall under the power of the law in deed, it is only turned into a new channel, it is not dried up. If you go and set a dam against the streams of a river, so that you suffer no water to pass in the old course and channel, but it breaks out another way, and turns all its streams in a new course, you will not say you have dried up that river, though some that come and look into the old channel may think perhaps that the waters are utterly gone. So it is in this case. The streams of sin, it may be, run in open sensuality and profaneness, in drunkenness and viciousness; the preaching of the law sets a dam against these courses; conscience is terrified, and the man dares not walk in the ways wherein he hath been formerly engaged. His companions in sin, not finding him in his old ways, begin to laugh at him, as one that is converted, and growing precise; professors themselves begin to be persuaded that the work of God is upon his heart, because they see his old streams are dried up. But if there have been only a work of the law upon him, the spring of sin is not dried up, only there is a dam put to his course, the streams of it are turned another away. It may be, the man is fallen upon other more secret or more spiritual sins; or, if he be beat from them also, the whole

strength of lust and sin will take up its residence in self-righteousness, and pour out thereby as filthy streams as in any other way whatever. So that, notwithstanding the whole work of the law upon the souls of men, indwelling sin will keep alive in them still, which is another evidence of its great power and strength.

I shall yet touch upon some other evidences of the same truth that I have under consideration; but I shall be brief in them.

I. In the next place, then, the great endeavours of men, ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, for the subduing and mortifying of sin, which are all fruitless, do evidence the great strength and power of it.

Men who have no strength against sin, may yet be made sensible of the strength of sin. The way whereby, for the most part, they come to that knowledge, is by some previous sense that they have of the guilt of sin. This men have by the light of their consciences; they cannot avoid it. This is not a thing in their choice; whether they will or no, they cannot but know sin to be evil, and such an evil as renders them obnoxious to the judgment of God. This galls the minds and consciences of some so far that they are kept in awe, and dare not sin as they would. Being awed with a sense of the guilt of sin, and the terror of the Lord, men begin to abstain from sin, at least from such sins as they have been most terrified about. While they have this design in hand, the strength and power of sin begins to discover itself unto them; they begin to find, that there is something in them that is not in their own power; for notwithstanding their resolutions and purposes, they sin still; and that so, or in such a manner, as that their consciences inform them they must therefore perish

eternally. This puts them on self-endeavours to suppress the eruption of sin, because they cannot be quiet unless so they do, nor have any rest or peace within. Now, being ignorant of that only way whereby sin is to be mortified, that is, by the Spirit of Christ, they fix on many ways, in their own strength, to suppress it if not to slay it; even as, being ignorant of that only way whereby consciences burthened with the guilt of sin may be pacified, that is, by the blood of Christ, they endeavour by many other ways to accomplish that end in vain, for no man, by any self-endeavours, can obtain peace with God. Some of the ways whereby they endeavour to suppress the power of sin, which casts them into an unquiet condition, and their insufficiency for that end, we must look into.

1. They will promise and bind themselves by vows, from those things which they have been most liable unto, and so have been most perplexed withal. The psalmist shows this to be one great engine whereby false and hypocritical persons do endeavour to extricate and deliver themselves out of trouble and perplexity; they make promises to God, which he calls, "flattering him with the mouth," Psa. lxxviii. 36. So it is in this case. Being freshly galled with the guilt of any sin that, by the power of their temptations, it may be, they have been frequently overtaken in, they vow and promise that, at least for some such space of time as they will limit, they will not commit that sin again: and this course of proceeding is prescribed unto them by some who pretend to direct their consciences in this duty. Conscience, by these, now makes them watch over themselves, as to the outward act of the sin that they are galled with; and, as either they do abstain from it for the time they had

prefixed, or they do not, so it hath one of these two effects. If they do not, (as seldom they do, especially if it be a sin that hath a peculiar root in their nature and constitution, is improved by custom into a habit, and some suitable temptation be presented unto them,) their sin is increased, and therewith their terror, and they are woefully discouraged in making any opposition to sin. And therefore for the most part, after one or two vain attempts, or more it may be, knowing no other way to mortify sin but this of vowing against it and keeping that vow in their own strength, they give over all contests, and become wholly the servants of sin, being bounded only by outward considerations, without any serious endeavours for a recovery. Or secondly, suppose that they have success in their resolutions, and do abstain from actual sins their appointed season, commonly one of these two things ensues; either they think they have well discharged their duty, and so may a little now, at least for a season, indulge their corruptions and lusts, and so are entangled again in the same snares of sin as formerly: or else they reckon that their vow and promise hath preserved them, and so sacrifice to their own net and drag, setting up a righteousness of their own against the grace of God; which is so far from weakening indwelling sin, that it strengthens it in the root and principle, that it may hereafter reign in the soul in security. Or at the most, the best success that can be imagined unto this way of dealing with sin, is but the restraining of some outward eruptions of it, which tends nothing to the weakening of its power; and therefore such persons, by all their endeavours, are very far from being freed from the inward toiling, burning, disquieting, perplexing power of sin. And this is the state of most men that are kept in bondage

under the power of conviction. Hell, death, and the wrath of God, are continually presented unto their consciences; this makes them labour with all their strength against that sin which most enrageth their consciences, and most increaseth their fears; that is, the actual eruption of it; for, for the most part, while they are freed from that they are safe, though in the mean time sin lies tumultuating in the heart and defiling it continually. As with running sores, outward repelling medicines may skin them over and hinder their corruption from coming forth, but the issue of them is, that they cause them to fester inwardly, and so prove, though it may be not so noisome and offensive as they were before, yet far more dangerous: so it is with this repelling of the power of corruption by men's vows and promises against it; external eruptions are, it may be, restrained for a season, but the inward root and principle is not weakened in the least. And most commonly this is the issue of this way; that sin, having gotten more strength, and being enraged by its restraint, breaks all its bounds, and captivates the soul unto all filthy abominations; which is the principle, as was before observed, of most of the visible apostasies which we have in the world; 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

The Holy Ghost compares sinners, because of the odious, fierce, poisonous nature of this indwelling sin, unto lions, bears, and asps, Isa. xi. 6—9. Now this is the excellency of gospel grace, that it changes the nature and inward principles of these otherwise passionate, untamed beasts; making the wolf as the kid, the lion as the lamb, and the bear as the cow. When this is effected, they may safely be trusted in; "a little child may lead them." But these self-endeavours do not at all change their nature, but restrain

their outward violence. He that takes a lion or a wolf, and shuts him up from ravening, whilst yet his inward violence remains, may well expect that at one time or other they will break their bonds, and fall to their former ways of rapine and violence: however, shutting them up doth not, as we see, change their natures, but only restrains their rage from doing open spoil. So it is in this case; it is grace alone that changeth the heart, and takes away that poison and fierceness that is in them by nature; men's self-endeavours do but coerce them as to some outward eruptions.

2. Beyond bare vows and promises, with some watchfulness to observe them in a rational use of ordinary means, men have put, and some do yet put themselves on extraordinary ways of mortifying sin. This is the foundation of all that hath a show of wisdom and religion in the papacy; their hours of prayer, their fastings, their immuring and cloistering themselves, their pilgrimages, penances, and self-torturing discipline, spring all from this root. I shall not speak of the innumerable evils that have attended these self-invented ways of mortification, and how they all of them have been turned into means, occasions, and advantages of sinning; nor of the horrible hypocrisy which evidently cleaves unto the most of their observers; nor of that superstition which gives life to them all, being a thing rivetted in the natures and constitutions of some, fixed on others by inveterate prejudices; and the same of others taken up for secular advantages. But I will suppose the best that can be made of it; and it will be found to be a self-invented design of men, ignorant of the righteousness of God, to give a check to this power of indwelling sin whereof we speak. And it is almost incredible, what fear-

ful self-macerations and horrible sufferings this design hath carried men out unto. And undoubtedly their blind zeal and superstition will rise in judgment, and condemn the horrible sloth and negligence of the most of them to whom the Lord hath granted the saving light of the gospel. But what is the end of these things? The apostle in brief gives us an account; they attain not to the righteousness aimed at, Rom. ix. 31, 32. They come not up unto a conformity to the law; sin is not mortified, no, nor the power of it weakened; but what it loseth in sensual, in carnal pleasures, it takes up with great advantage in blindness, darkness, superstition, self-righteousness and soul-pride, contempt of the gospel and the righteousness of it; and reigns no less than in the most profligate sinners in the world.

II. Lastly, the strength, efficacy, and power of this law of sin, may be further evidenced from its life and inbeing in the soul, notwithstanding the wound that is given to it in the first conversion of the soul to God, and the continual opposition that is made to it by grace. But this is the subject and design of another endeavour.

It may now be expected, that we should here add the special uses of all this discovery that hath been made of the power, deceit, prevalency, and success, of this great adversary of our souls. But as what concerns that humility, self-abasement, watchfulness, diligence, and application unto the Lord Christ for relief, which will become those who find in themselves, by experience, the power of this law of sin, hath been occasionally mentioned and inculcated through the whole preceding discourse; so, for what concerns the actual mortification of it, I shall only recommend unto the reader for his direction another

small treatise, written long since unto that purpose, which I suppose he may do well to consider together with this, if he find these things to be his concernment.

To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

THE END.

THE

MORTIFICATION OF SIN

IN BELIEVERS:

CONTAINING THE NECESSITY, NATURE, AND MEANS OF IT;

WITH A

RESOLUTION OF SUNDRY CASES OF CONSCIENCE
THERETO BELONGING.

BY JOHN OWEN, D. D.

This edition has been carefully revised, the punctuation corrected, and an analysis added.

TO THE READER.

Christian Reader,

I shall in a few words acquaint thee with the reasons that obtained my consent to the publishing of the ensuing discourse. The consideration of the present state and condition of the generality of professors—the visible evidences of the frame of their hearts and spirits, manifesting a great disability of dealing with the temptations wherewith, from the peace they have in the world, and the divisions that they have among themselves, they are encompassed—holds the chief place amongst them. This, I am assured, is of so great importance, that if hereby I only occasion others to press more effectually on the consciences of men the work of considering their ways, and to give more clear direction for the compassing of the end proposed, I shall well esteem of my lot in this undertaking. This was seconded by an observation of some men's

dangerous mistakes, who of late days have taken upon them to give directions for the mortification of sin; who being unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel, and the efficacy of the death of Christ, have anew imposed the yoke of a self-wrought-out mortification on the necks of their disciples, which neither they nor their forefathers were ever able to bear. A mortification, they cry up and press, suitable to that of the gospel neither in respect of nature, subject, causes, means, nor effects; which constantly produces the deplorable issues of superstition, self-righteousness, and anxiety of conscience, in them who take up the burden which is so bound for them.

What is here proposed in weakness, I humbly hope will answer the spirit and letter of the gospel, with the experiences of them who know what it is to walk with God according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. So that, if not this, yet certainly something of this kind, is very necessary at this season, for the promotion and furtherance of this work of gospel mortification in the hearts of believers, and their direction in paths, safe, and wherein they may find rest to their souls. Something I have to add, as to what in particular relates unto myself. Having preached on this subject unto some comfortable success, through the grace of Him that administered seed to the sower, I was pressed by sundry persons, in whose

hearts are the ways of God, thus to publish what I had delivered, with such additions and alterations as I should judge necessary. Under the inducement of their desires, I called to remembrance the debt wherein I have now for some years stood engaged unto sundry noble and worthy Christian friends, as to a treatise of Communion with God,* some while since promised to them; and thereon apprehended, that if I could not hereby compound for the greater debt, yet I might possibly tender them this discourse of variance with themselves, as interest for their forbearance of that of peace and communion with God. Besides, I considered that I had been providentially engaged in the public debate of sundry controversies in religion, which might seem to claim something in another kind, of more general use, as a fruit of choice, not necessity. On these and the like accounts is this short discourse brought forth to public view, and now presented unto thee. I hope I may own in sincerity, that my heart's desire unto God, and the chief design of my life in the station wherein the good providence of God hath placed me, are, that mortification and universal holiness may be promoted in my own and in the hearts and ways of others, to the glory of God; that so the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be

* Since the first edition of this Treatise, that other also is published.

adorned in all things. For the compassing of which end, if this little discourse, of the publishing whereof this is the sum of the account I shall give, may in any thing be useful to the least of the saints, it will be looked on as a return of the weak prayers wherewith it is attended by its unworthy author,

J. OWEN.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

The foundation of the whole ensuing discourse laid in Rom. viii. 13. The words of the apostle opened. The certain connexion between true mortification and salvation. Mortification the work of believers. The Spirit the principal efficient cause of it. What meant by "the body" in the words of the apostle. What by "the deeds of the body." Life, in what sense promised to this duty 1

CHAP. II.

The principal assertion concerning the necessity of mortification proposed to confirmation. Mortification the duty of the best believers, Col. iii. 5; 1 Cor. ix. 27. Indwelling sin always abides; no perfection in this life, Phil. iii. 12; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 18; Gal. v. 17, etc. The activity of abiding sin in believers, Rom. vii. 23; James iv. 5; Heb. xii. 1. Its fruitfulness and tendency. Every lust aims at the height in its kind. The Spirit and new nature given to contend against indwelling sin, Gal. v. 17; 2 Pet. i. 4, 5; Rom vii. 23. The fearful issue of the neglect of mortification, Rev. iii. 2; Heb. iii. 13. The first general principle of the whole discourse hence confirmed. Want of this duty lamented 8

CHAP. III.

The second general principle of the means of mortification proposed to confirmation. The Spirit the only author of this work. Vanity of popish mortification discovered. Many means of it used by them not appointed of God. Those appointed by him abused. The mistakes of others in this business. The Spirit is promised believers for this work, Ezek. xi. 19; xxxvi. 26. All that we receive from Christ is by the Spirit. How the Spirit mortifies sin, Gal. v. 19—23. The several ways of his operations to this end proposed. How his work and our duty 20

CHAP. IV.

PAGE

The last principle: Of the usefulness of mortification. The vigour and comfort of our spiritual life depend on our mortification. In what sense? Not absolutely and necessarily. Heman's condition, Psa. lxxxviii. Not as the next and immediate cause. As a means by removing the contrary. The desperate effects of unmortified lust: it weakens the soul sundry ways, Psa. xxxviii. 3, 8, and darkens it. All graces improved by the mortification of sin. The best evidence of sincerity 28

CHAP. V.

The principal intention of the whole discourse proposed. The first main case of conscience stated. What it is to mortify any sin, negatively considered. Not the utter destruction of it in this life. Not the dissimulation of it. Not the improvement of any natural principle. Not the diversion of it. Not an occasional conquest. Occasional conquests of sin, what, and when. Upon the eruption of sin in time of danger or trouble 34

CHAP. VI.

The mortification of sin in particular described. The several parts and degrees thereof. 1. The habitual weakening of its root and principle. The power of lust to tempt. Differences of that power to persons and times. 2. Constant fighting against sin. The parts thereof considered. 3. Success against it. The sum of this discourse 40

CHAP. VII.

General rules, without which no lust will be mortified. No mortification unless a man be a believer. Dangers of attempting mortification of sin by unregenerate persons. The duty of unconverted persons, as to this business of mortification, considered. The vanity of the papists' attempts, and rules for mortification thence discovered 49

CHAP. VIII.

The second general rule proposed. Without universal sincerity for the mortifying of every lust, no lust will be mortified. Partial mortification always from a corrupt principle. Perplexity of temptation from a lust, ofttimes a chastening for other negligences 62

CHAP. IX.

PAGE

Particular directions in relation to the foregoing case proposed. First, Consider the dangerous symptoms of any lust: 1. Inveterateness. 2. Peace obtained under it; the several ways whereby that is done. 3. Frequency of success in its seductions 4. The soul's fighting against it with arguments taken only from the event. 5. Its being attended with judiciary hardness. 6. Its withstanding particular dealings from God. The state of persons in whom these things are found 67

CHAP. X.

The second particular direction. Get a clear sense of, 1. The guilt of the sin perplexing. Considerations for help therein proposed. 2. Of the danger; manifold. (1.) Of hardening. (2.) Of temporal correction. (3.) Of loss of peace and strength. (4.) Of eternal destruction. Rules for the management of this consideration. 3. The evil of it, (1.) In grieving the Spirit. (2.) In wounding the new creature 79

CHAP. XI.

The third direction proposed. Load the conscience with the guilt of the perplexing distemper. The ways and means whereby that may be done. The fourth direction. Vehement desire for deliverance. The fifth direction. Some distempers rooted deeply in men's natural tempers. Considerations of such distempers: ways of dealing with them. The sixth direction. Occasions and advantages of sin to be prevented. The seventh direction. The first actings of sin vigorously to be opposed 90

CHAP. XII.

The eighth direction. Thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God. Our unacquaintedness with him, proposed and considered 101

CHAP. XIII.

The ninth direction. When the heart is disquieted by sin, speak no peace to it, until God speak it. Peace without detestation of sin, unsound; so is peace measured out unto ourselves. How we may know when we measure our peace unto ourselves. Directions as to that inquiry. The vanity of speaking peace slightly. Also of doing it on one singular account, not universally . 114

CHAP. XIV.

PAGE

The general use of the foregoing directions. The great direction for the accomplishment of the work aimed at. Act faith on Christ: the several ways whereby this may be done. Consideration of the fulness in Christ for relief, proposed. Great expectations from Christ: grounds of these expectations; his mercifulness, his faithfulness. Event of such expectations; on the part of Christ; on the part of believers. Faith peculiarly to be acted on the death of Christ; Rom. vi. 3—6. The work of the Spirit in this whole business 128

ANALYSIS

AND

INDEX OF THE TREATISE.

CHAP. I. Rom. viii. 13, latter clause of the verse; explained. Division of topics, 2.
Division according to the order of the verse, 2.
I. The conditional note, "but if," 2. Denotes two things;
1. The uncertainty of the event in respect to them to whom the duty is prescribed, 2.
2. The certainty of the connexion between the things spoken of, 3.
II. The persons to whom the duty is prescribed, 3. Main foundation of the treatise, 4.
III. The principal efficient cause of the performance of the duty, namely, the Spirit, 4.
IV. The duty itself, to "mortify the deeds of the body," 5. Three things here to be inquired into;
1. What is meant by "the body," 5.
2. What is meant by the "deeds of the body," 5.
3. What is meant by "mortifying the deeds of the body," 6.
V. The promise annexed to the duty, namely, "Ye shall live," 7.

CHAP. II. Confirmation of the principal deductions in the preceding chapter, 8.
I. The first is, *That the choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business, all their days, to mortify the indwelling power of sin*, 8.
Reasons why there can be no exemption from this duty, 9. As,
1. Indwelling sin remains so long as we are in this world, 9.
2. Not only remains, but acts towards bringing forth the deeds of the flesh, 11.
3. Not only will act towards this, but, unless mortified, will bring forth great sins, 12.
4. It is one main reason why we have the Spirit and a new nature given us, that we may have a principle to oppose sin, 14.

5. Negligence in this duty makes our condition the contrary to that described, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 15.
6. It is our duty to be perfecting holiness, which cannot be without the mortification of sin, 16.

Evils of religious profession without the mortification of sin, 17. Two;
1. In the professor himself, 18.
2. In respect to others, 19. On them it has a two-fold evil influence;
   (1.) It hardens them, 19.
   (2.) It deceives them, 20.

CHAP. III. II. The second principle to be confirmed, is, *That the Spirit is the great, sovereign cause of the mortification of sin*, 20.
1. In vain do men seek after other remedies, 20. The Popish modes of mortification unsuccessful, 21.
   (1.) Because many of them not appointed by God, 22.
   (2.) Because the appointed means which they use not used rightly, 22.
2. It is, on the contrary, the work of the Spirit, 24. For,
   (1.) He is promised of God to us, 24.
   (2.) Our mortification of sin is from Christ, and all that he gives us is communicated by the Spirit, 24.

Some questions resolved:
Qu. 1. How does the Spirit mortify sin? 25.
Ans. In three ways;
(1.) By causing our hearts to abound in grace, and the fruits contrary to the flesh, 25.
(2.) By an influence on sin itself, to weaken and destroy it, 26.
(3.) By bringing the cross of Christ into the heart, and giving us communion with him in his death, 26.
Qu. 2. If this be the work of the Spirit, how is it that we are exhorted to it? 26.
Ans. 1. It is no otherwise his work than as all graces and good works are, 26.
Ans. 2. He does not so effect it as that it should not be still an act of our obedience, 26.

CHAP. IV. III. The third and last principle to be confirmed, is, *That the life, vigour, and comfort of our spiritual life, depend much on our mortification of sin*, 28.
Observe here,
1. It is not affirmed that these things proceed from mortification as if necessarily connected with it, 29.

2. In the ways instituted to give us these blessings, mortification is not one of the immediate causes of them, 29.
3. But still, these blessings depend on it, not only as an indispensable requisite, but as having an effectual influence in securing them, 30. For,
   (1.) This alone keeps sin from depriving us of them, 30. An unmortified sin has two effects;
      [1.] It weakens the soul, 30.
      [2.] It darkens the soul, and deprives it of comfort and peace, 31.
   (2.) Mortification of sin prunes Christian graces, and makes room for their growth, 32.
   (3.) Bring an evidence of sincerity; it lays a foundation for our peace, 33.

CHAP. V. The principal design of the treatise proposed, namely, the consideration of practical cases in the mortification of sin, 34.
One stated, to which all others may be reduced, 34.
In treating which, FIRST, Show what it is to mortify a sin: SECOND, Give general directions as to things without which there will be no mortification: THIRD, Give particular directions concerning mortification itself, 34.
FIRST: Show what it is to mortify a sin, 35.
I. It is not the utter destruction of it, 35.
II. Nor the dissimulation of it, 36.
III. Nor the improvement of a quiet, sedate nature, 36.
IV. A sin not mortified when merely diverted, 37.
V. Occasional conquests do not amount to mortification, 38.
It may appear mortified, but is not,
1. When it has, by some eruption, roused conscience against it, 38.
2. When, in a time of judgment or affliction, the soul relinquishes sin, 39.

CHAP. VI. The mortification of a sin or lust, consists,
I. In an habitual weakening of it, 40.
II. In constant contending against it, 45. This implies,
1. That we know we have such an enemy to deal with, 45.
2. That we labour to become acquainted with its ways of success, 46.
3. That we load it constantly with such things as tend to destroy it, 47.
III. In success against it, 47.

CHAP. VII. SECOND: General rules and principles, without which sin will not be mortified, 49.

I. A man must be a true believer in order to his mortifying sin, 49. Evils attending the endeavours of convinced persons to mortify sin without faith;

1. Their minds taken up with that which is not their proper business, 54.
2. Led to self-delusion as to their condition, 55. For,
   (1.) The conscience is quieted without going to Christ, 56.
   (2.) The soul thinks its state good because of its sincere endeavours to do a good work, 56.
3. The soul, being unsuccessful, after a season abandons the work in despair, 56.

Object. Are unregenerate, convinced persons, to give themselves up to sin? 57.

Ans. 1. No; for it is in the wisdom and goodness of God that men are, by various means, restrained from sin, 58.

Ans. 2. The word is to be preached, in order to convince of sin, and to restrain it, 58.

Ans. 3. Though this end be the work of the word and Spirit, yet it is not the main end in reference to the souls of sinners, 58.

Ans. 4. Let men know that mortification is their duty, but in its proper place, 58.

CHAP. VIII. II. Without sincerity and diligence in universal obedience, no mortification of any one perplexing lust can be obtained, 62. For,

1. Partial attempts at mortification proceed from a wrong principle, 63.
2. It may be, God has permitted the particular lust to gain strength as a chastisement for other negligences, 64. For,
   (1.) The natural effect of general negligence is the predominance of some particular sin, 65.
   (2.) God permits this, to chastise negligence, 65.

CHAP. IX. THIRD: Particular directions for the mortification of a sin, 67. Of these, I. Some are preparatory; II. Some relate to the work itself.

I. Preparatory directions, 67.

Direction 1. Consider what dangerous symptoms accompany the sin, 67. These are,
   (1.) Inveterateness, 67.
   (2.) Secret pleas for maintaining peace in the soul without mortification of the sin, 69. As for example,

[1.] When, upon perplexity from sin, a man searches for evidences of his good condition, without mortification, 69.
[2.] When grace and mercy are applied to a sin, without sincere endeavours to mortify it, 70.
(3.) Frequency of success in sin's seductions, 72.
(4.) When sin is resisted only by means of arguments from its consequences, 73.
(5.) When it appears that the lust has in it something of judicial hardness, or at least, of chastisement, 75.
(6.) When it has already withstood particular dealings from God against it, 76.

CHAP. X. *Direction* 2. Get a clear and abiding sense of the guilt, danger, and evil of the perplexing sin, 79.
(1.) Of its guilt, 79. In order to which, consider,
[1.] That whilst grace weakens the power of sin, it aggravates the guilt of what remains, 80.
[2.] That as God sees much excellency in what is holy in his servants, he sees peculiar evil in what is sinful, 81.
(2.) Of its danger, 82. There is,
[1.] The danger of being hardened by its deceitfulness, 82.
[2.] The danger of some great temporal correction, 83.
[3.] The danger of the loss of peace and strength all our days, 84.
[4.] The danger of eternal destruction, 85.
(3.) Of its evils, 87.
[1.] It grieves the holy and blessed Spirit, 87.
[2.] It wounds the Lord Jesus afresh, 88.
[3.] It takes away a man's usefulness in his generation, 88.

CHAP. XI. *Direction* 3. Load thy conscience with the guilt of the sin, 90. In order to which,
(1.) Begin with generals, 90.
[1.] Its guilt as seen from the law, to be charged upon the conscience, 90. Evasions of this to be resisted, 91.
[2.] It ought to be brought to the gospel for farther conviction of its guilt, 92.
(2.) Descend to particulars, 93.
[1.] Consider God's patience and forbearance towards thee in particular, 93.
[2.] Consider how often thou hast been recovered when ready to be hardened, 94.

[3.] Consider all God's gracious providential dealings with thee, 94

Direction 4. Get a constant longing after deliverance from thy sin, 95.

Direction 5. Consider whether thy distemper be not rooted in thy natural constitution, and aided by it, 96. If it be so,

(1.) Consider that it is no extenuation of the sin, 96.

(2.) Fix upon this consideration, that it gives the more dangerous advantage to sin and Satan, 97.

(3.) It makes it needful to bring the body itself into subjection, 97. Which is to be done with these limitations;

[1.] It is to be looked upon as good only in reference to the end, 98.

[2.] No virtue for the mortifying of sin is to be attributed to the mere exercises for mortifying the body, 98.

Direction 6. Consider the occasions and advantages which have been taken by the sin, and watch against them, 98.

Direction 7. Vigorously resist the first actings of the sin, 100.

CHAP. XII. *Direction* 8. Exercise thyself in meditations tending to self-abasement, 101. As,

(1.) Think much of the excellency of the majesty of God, 101.

(2.) Think much of thine ignorance of God, 102. This ignorance affirmed of Moses, John i. 18, 103. But if it be replied that we are under the gospel,

Ans. 1. A vast difference, no doubt, between being under the law and under the gospel, 103.

Ans. 2. Yet that which Moses had was a gospel sight, 104.

Ans. 3. Even gospel knowledge is affirmed to be as "in a glass, darkly," 104.

Reasons of our ignorance will be found when we consider,

[1.] Him who is to be known, 106.

[2.] The way in which he is known, that is, by faith, 108.

If it be said that this ignorance is not to be affirmed of them who know God in Christ, 110.

Ans. 1. We do indeed know enough of God to love him more than we do, 110.

Ans. 2. Our knowledge of God in the gospel is comparatively great and glorious, 111.

Ans. 3. Believers and unbelievers differ more as to the manner than the matter of their knowledge, 111.

Ans. 4. To his own, Christ reveals God in such a manner as is necessary for present obedience and final blessedness in him, 112.

Ans. 5. But yet it is to be affirmed that we know little of God, 112. For,

[1.] The institution of the gospel revelation is only to show so much of God as is necessary to faith, love, and obedience, 112.

[2.] We are dull and slow of heart to receive the things revealed, 113.

CHAP. XIII. *Direction* 9. When God disquiets the heart concerning sin, speak no peace to thyself until God speaks it, 114. For,

(1.) God reserves to himself the privilege of speaking peace, 114.

(2.) It is the prerogative of Christ to speak it home to the conscience, 115.

Rules for knowing when God speaks peace, and when men speak it to themselves, 116.

(1.) Men speak peace, when their doing so is not attended with the utmost detestation of the particular sin, 116.

(2.) They do so when they measure out peace to themselves from their mere convictions and rational principles, 120.

Quest. How shall we know that the Spirit is with us in speaking peace, or whether it is of ourselves? 122.

Ans. 1. If you are in a wrong course, God will let you know it by your peace not abiding, 122.

Ans. 2. It will be discovered by the haste with which the soul proceeds in speaking peace to itself, 123.

Ans. 3. It will be discovered by its not imparting sweet and gracious contentment to the heart, 123.

Ans. 4. It will be discovered by its not amending the life or curing the evil, 124.

(3.) They speak peace to themselves when they do it slightly, 124.

(4.) They do so when there is some other sin lying upon the heart, about which they have no dealing with God, 125.

(5.) They do so if it be not accompanied with humiliation, 126.

Quest. When may we take the comfort of a promise in reference to some wound of the conscience? 126.

Ans. When God speaks it, 126.

Quest. But when does God speak it? 126.

Ans. 1. It would be well if we attained to this much, to receive peace when God speaks it, 127.
Ans. 2. We may know by the secret instinct of faith, 127.
Ans. 3. When the word of the Lord does good to the soul, he speaks it, 128.

CHAP. XIV. II. Directions for the work of mortification itself, 128.
Direction 1. Exercise faith upon Christ for the destruction of sin, 129. Which should be in several ways; as,
(1.) By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of the provision laid up in Christ for the mortification of sin, 129.
(2.) By faith rouse thy heart to an expectation of relief from Christ, 131. In order to which,
[1.] Consider his mercifulness, tenderness, and kindness, as our great High Priest, 133.
[2.] Consider his faithfulness, as having promised, 135.
Advantages from this expectation;
(1.) It engages Christ to a full and speedy assistance, 135.
(2.) It engages our attention to the ways and means in which Christ communicates assistance, 136.
The exercise of faith ought to be,
(1.) On the death and cross of Christ, 137.
(2.) And that with two views,
[1.] In expectation of power, 139.
[2.] In endeavour after conformity, 139.
This whole work is effected by the power of the Spirit, 140. For,
I. He convinces of the evil, guilt, and danger of the sin to be mortified, 140.
II. He reveals the fulness of Christ for our relief, 141.
III. He establishes the heart in the expectation of relief from Christ, 141.
IV. He brings the cross of Christ and its influence into the heart, 141.
V. He is the Author and Finisher of our sanctification, 141.
VI. In all the soul's addresses to God it is supported by the Spirit, 142.

THE

MORTIFICATION OF SIN

IN BELIEVERS.

CHAPTER I.

The foundation of the whole ensuing discourse laid in Rom. viii. 13. *The words of the apostle opened. The certain connexion between true mortification and salvation. Mortification the work of believers. The Spirit the principal efficient cause of it. What meant by "the body" in the words of the apostle. What by "the deeds of the body." Life, in what sense promised to this duty.*

THAT what I have of direction to contribute to the carrying on the work of mortification in believers, may receive order and perspicuity, I shall lay the foundation of it in those words of the apostle, Rom. viii. 13, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" and reduce the whole to an improvement of the great evangelical truth and mystery contained in them.

The apostle having made a recapitulation of his doctrine of justification by faith, and the blessed estate and condition of them who are made by grace partakers thereof, ver. 1—3 of this chapter,

proceeds to improve it, to the holiness and consolation of believers.

Among his arguments and motives unto holiness, the verse mentioned containeth one, from the contrary events and effects of holiness and sin: "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." What it is to "live after the flesh," and what it is to "die," that being not my present aim and business, I shall no otherwise explain than as they will fall in with the sense of the latter words of the verse, as before proposed.

In the words peculiarly designed for the foundation of the ensuing discourse, there is, first, a duty prescribed; "mortify the deeds of the body:" secondly, the persons are denoted to whom it is prescribed; "ye, if ye mortify:" thirdly, there is in them a promise annexed to that duty; "ye shall live:" fourthly, the cause or means of the performance of this duty, the Spirit; "if ye through the Spirit:" fifthly, the conditionality of the whole proposition, wherein duty, means, and promise are contained; "if ye," &c.

But as the words lie in the entire proposition,

I. The first thing occurring is the conditional note, "but if." Conditionals in such propositions may denote two things:

1. The uncertainty of the event or thing promised, in respect of them to whom the duty is prescribed. And this takes place where the condition is absolutely necessary unto the issue, and depends not itself on any determinate cause known to him to whom it is prescribed. So we say, If we live we will do such a thing. This cannot be the intention of the conditional ex-

pression in this place. Of the persons to whom these words are spoken, it is said, ver. 1, of the same chapter, "there is no condemnation to them."

2. The certainty of the coherence and connexion that is between the things spoken of: as we say to a sick man, If you will take such a potion, or use such a remedy, you will be well: the thing we solely intend to express, is the certainty of the connexion that is between the potion or remedy and health. And this is the use of it here. The certain connexion that is between the "mortifying of the deeds" of the body, and "living," is intimated in this conditional particle.

Now the connexion and coherence of things being manifold, as of cause and effect, of way and means and the end; this, between mortification and life, is not of cause and effect properly and strictly, for "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 23; but of means and end: God hath appointed this means, for the attaining that end which he hath freely promised. Means, though necessary, have a fair subordination to an end of free promise. A gift, and a procuring cause in him to whom it is given, are inconsistent. The intention, then, of this proposition as conditional, is, *That there is a certain infallible connexion and coherence between true mortification and eternal life.* If you use this means, you shall obtain that end. If you do "mortify," you shall live. And herein lies the main motive unto, and enforcement of, the duty prescribed.

II. The next thing we meet with in the words, is the persons to whom this duty is prescribed;

and that is expressed in the word *ye*, if "ye mortify:" that is, ye believers; ye to whom "there is no condemnation," ver. 1; ye that are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, ver. 5; who are "quickened by the Spirit of Christ," ver. 10, 11; to you is this duty prescribed. The pressing of this duty immediately on any other, is a notable fruit of that superstition and self-righteousness that the world is so full of; the great work and design of devout men ignorant of the gospel; Rom. x. 3, 4; John xv. 5. Now, this description of the persons, in conjunction with the prescription of the duty, is the main foundation of the ensuing discourse, as it lies in this thesis or proposition:

The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business, all their days, to mortify the indwelling power of sin.

III. The principal efficient *cause* of the performance of this duty is the Spirit; "if by the Spirit." The Spirit here, is the Spirit mentioned ver. 11, the "Spirit of Christ," the Spirit of God that dwells in us, ver. 9, that quickens us, ver. 11, the "Spirit of adoption," ver. 15, the Spirit that maketh intercession for us, ver. 26. All other ways of mortification are vain; all helps leave us helpless; it must be done by the Spirit. Men, as the apostle intimates, Rom. ix. 30—32, may attempt this work on other principles, by means and advantages administered on other accounts, as they always have done and do: but (saith he) this is the work of the Spirit; by him alone it is to be wrought, and by no other power is it to be brought about. Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention,

unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world: and this is a second principle of my ensuing discourse.

IV. The duty itself, "mortify the deeds of the body," is next to be remarked.

Three things are here to be inquired into: 1. What is meant by "the body:" 2. What by "the deeds of the body:" 3. What by "mortifying" them.

1. The body, in the close of the verse, is the same with the flesh, in the beginning; "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," but if ye "mortify the deeds of the body," that is, of the flesh. It is that which the apostle hath all along discoursed of, under the name of the flesh; which is evident from the prosecution of the contrast between the Spirit and the flesh, before and after. The body, then, is here taken for that corruption and pravity of our natures, whereof the body in a great part is the seat and instrument; the very members of the body being made servants unto unrighteousness thereby, Rom. vi. 19. It is indwelling sin, the corrupted flesh or lust, that is intended. Many reasons might be given for this figurative expression, that I shall not now insist on. The body here is the same with the "old man," and the "body of sin," Rom. vi. 6; or it may, by another figure, express the whole person, considered as corrupted, and the seat of lusts and distempered affections.

2. The deeds of the body. The word "deeds" denoteth, indeed, the outward actions chiefly, "the works of the flesh," as they are called, Gal. v. 19, which are there said to be manifest, and are

enumerated. Now, though the outward deeds are here only expressed, yet the inward and nearest causes are chiefly intended. The "axe is to be laid to the root of the tree:" the deeds of the flesh are to be mortified in their causes, from whence they spring. The apostle calls them deeds, as that which every lust tends unto: though it do but conceive, and prove abortive, it aims to bring forth a perfect sin.

Having, both in the seventh and the beginning of this chapter, treated of indwelling lust and sin as the fountain and principle of all sinful actions, he here mentions its destruction, under the name of the effects which it doth produce. "The deeds of the body," are as much as "the wisdom of the flesh," Rom. viii. 6, by a figure of the same nature with the former; or as the "passions and lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 24, whence the deeds and fruits of it do arise: and in this sense is "the body" used, ver. 10; "the body is dead because of sin."

3. To mortify; or, as in the original, "if ye put to death;" a metaphorical expression, taken from the putting of any living thing to death. To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all his strength, vigour, and power, so that he cannot act, or exert, or put forth any proper actings of his own. So it is in this case. Indwelling sin is compared to a person, a living person, called the old man, with his faculties and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtlety, strength: this (says the apostle) must be killed, put to death, mortified; that is, have its power, life, vigour, and strength to produce its effects, taken away by the Spirit. It is indeed meritori-

ously, and by way of example, utterly mortified and slain by the cross of Christ; and the old man is thence said to be "crucified with Christ," Rom. vi. 6, and "ourselves to be dead with him," ver. 8, and really, initially in regeneration, Rom. vi. 3—5, when a principle contrary to it, and *destructive* of it, Gal. v. 17, is planted in our hearts. But the whole work is by degrees to be carried on towards perfection all our days. Of this, more in the process of our discourse.

The intention of the apostle in this prescription of the duty mentioned, is, that the mortification of indwelling sin, remaining in our mortal bodies, in order that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh, is the constant duty of believers.

V. The promise unto this duty is life; "ye shall live." The life promised is opposed to the death threatened in the clause foregoing, "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" which the same apostle elsewhere expresseth, Gal. v. 8, "ye shall of the flesh reap corruption," or destruction from God. Now, perhaps, the word may not only intend eternal life, but also the spiritual life in Christ which here we have; not as to the essence and being of it, which is already enjoyed by believers; but as to the joy, comfort, and vigour of it: as the apostle says in another case, "Now I live, if ye stand fast," 1 Thess. iii. 8; now my life will do me good, I shall have joy and comfort with my life. "Ye shall live;" lead a good, vigorous, comfortable, spiritual life whilst you are here, and obtain eternal life hereafter.

Supposing what was said before, of the connexion between mortification and eternal life, as

of means and end, I shall add only, as a second motive to the duty prescribed, that,

The vigour, and power, and comfort, of our spiritual life, depend on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.

CHAP. II.

The principal assertion concerning the necessity of mortification proposed to confirmation. Mortification the duty of the best believers, Col. iii. 5; 1 Cor. ix. 27. *Indwelling sin always abides: no perfection in this life,* Phil. iii. 12; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 18; Gal. v. 17, &c. *The activity of abiding sin in believers,* Rom. vii. 23; James iv. 5; Heb. xii. 1. *Its fruitfulness and tendency. Every lust aims at the height in its kind. The Spirit and new nature given to contend against indwelling sin,* Gal. v. 17; 2 Pet. i. 4, 5; Rom. vii. 23. *The fearful issue of the neglect of mortification,* Rev. iii. 2; Heb. iii. 13. *The first general principle of the whole discourse hence confirmed. Want of this duty lamented.*

Having laid this foundation, a brief confirmation of the forementioned principal deductions will lead me to what I chiefly intend.

I. The first is, that the choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business, all their days, to mortify the indwelling power of sin.

So the apostle, Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Whom speaks he to? Such as were risen with Christ, ver. 1; such as were dead with him, ver. 3; such as whose life Christ was, and who should appear

with him in glory, ver. 4. Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin, or it will be killing you. Your being dead with Christ virtually, your being quickened with him, will not excuse you from this work. And our Saviour tells us how his Father deals with every branch in him that beareth fruit, every true and living branch; "he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," John xv. 2. He prunes it, and that not for a day or two, but whilst it is a branch in this world. And the apostle tells you what was his practice: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27. I do it (saith he) daily; it is the work of my life; I omit it not; this is my business. And if this were the work and business of Paul, who was so incomparably exalted in grace, light, revelations, enjoyments, privileges, consolations, above the ordinary measure of believers, where may we possibly bottom an exemption from this work and duty whilst we are in this world? Some brief account of the reasons hereof may be given.

1. Indwelling sin always abides whilst we are in this world; therefore it is always to be mortified. The vain, foolish, and ignorant disputes of men, about perfect keeping of the commands of God, of perfection in this life, of being wholly and perfectly dead to sin, I now meddle not with. It is more than probable, that the men of those abominations never knew what belonged to the keeping of any one of God's commands; and are so much below perfection of degrees, that they never attained to a perfection of parts in

obedience, or universal obedience in sincerity. And therefore many in our days who have talked of perfection, have been wiser, and have affirmed it to consist in knowing no difference between good and evil. Not that they are perfect in the things we call good, but that all is alike to them; and the height of wickedness is their perfection. Others, who have found out a new way to it, by denying original indwelling sin, and tempering the spirituality of the law of God unto men's carnal hearts, as they have sufficiently discovered themselves to be ignorant of the life of Christ and the power of it in believers, so they have invented a new righteousness that the gospel knows not of, being vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds. As for us, who dare not be wise above what is written, nor boast, by other men's lines, of what God hath not done for us, we say, that indwelling sin lives in us in some measure and degree whilst we are in this world. We dare not speak "as though we had already attained, or were already perfect," Phil. iii. 12: our "inward man is to be renewed day by day," whilst here we live, 2 Cor. iv. 16: and according to the renovations of the new, are the breaches and decays of the old. While we are here, we "know but in part," 1 Cor. xiii. 12; having a remaining darkness to be gradually removed, by our "growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. iii. 18. And the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would, and are therefore defective in our obedience as well as in our light, Gal. v. 17; 1 John i. 8. We have a "body of death," Rom. vii. 24, from whence we are not delivered but by the

"death of our bodies," Phil. iii. 21. Now it being our duty to mortify, to be killing sin, whilst it is in us we must be at work. He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work, Gal. vi. 9; Heb. xii. 1; 2 Cor. vii. 1.

2. Sin doth not only still abide in us, but is still acting, still labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. When sin lets us alone, we may let sin alone: but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times, in all conditions, even where there is least suspicion. Sin doth not only abide in us, but the "law of the members" is still "rebelling against the law of the mind," Rom. vii. 23, and "the spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy," James iv. 5. It is always in continual work, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17. Lust is still tempting, and conceiving sin, James i. 14. In every moral action, it is always either inclining to evil, or hindering from that which is good, or unframing the spirit from communion with God. It inclines to evil; "the evil that I would not, that I do," saith the apostle, Rom. vii. 19. Whence is that? Why, because "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And it hinders from good; "the good that I would do, that I do not," ver. 19. Upon the same account, either I do it not, or not as I should; all my holy things being defiled by this sin. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Gal. v. 17. And it unframes our spirit, and thence is called "the sin

that so easily besets us," Heb. xii. 1; on which account are those grievous complaints that the apostle makes of it, Rom. vii. So that sin is always acting, always conceiving, always seducing and tempting. Who can say that he had ever any thing to do with God, or for God, that indwelling sin had not a hand in the corrupting of what he did? And this trade will it drive, more or less, all our days. If, then, sin will be always acting, and we be not always mortifying, we are lost creatures. He that stands still, and suffers his enemies to double blows upon him without resistance, will undoubtedly be conquered in the issue. If sin be subtle, watchful, strong, and always at work in the business of killing our souls, and we be slothful, negligent, foolish, in proceeding to the ruin thereof, can we expect a comfortable event? There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed on; and it will be so, whilst we live in this world. I shall discharge him from this duty who can bring sin to a composition, to a cessation of arms in this warfare: if it will spare him any one day, in any one duty, (provided he be a person that is acquainted with the spirituality of obedience, and the subtlety of sin,) let him say to his soul, as to this duty, Soul, take thy rest. The saints whose souls breathe after deliverance from its perplexing rebellion, know there is no safety against it but in a constant warfare.

3. Sin will not only be striving, acting, rebelling, troubling, disquieting; but, if let alone, if not continually mortified, it will bring forth great, cursed, scandalous, soul-destroying sins. The apostle tells us what the works and fruits of it

are; "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like," Gal. v. 19—21. You know what it did in David, and sundry others. Sin aims always at the utmost: every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin of that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery, if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression; every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head. Men may come to that, that sin may not be heard speaking a scandalous word in their hearts; that is, provoking to any great sin with scandal in its mouth: but every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villany. It is like the grave, that is never satisfied. And herein lies no small share of the deceitfulness of sin, by which it prevails to the hardening of men, and so to their ruin, Heb. iii. 13. It is modest, as it were, in its first motions and proposals; but having once got footing in the heart by them, it constantly makes good its ground, and presseth on to some further degrees in the same kind. This new acting and pressing forward, makes the soul take little notice of what an entrance is already made to a falling off from God. It thinks all is indifferent well, if there be no further progress. And so far as the soul is made insensible to any sin, that is, as to such a sense as the gospel requireth, so far it is hardened. But sin is still pressing forward; and that because it hath no bounds but utter

relinquishment of God, and opposition to him. That it proceeds towards its height by degrees, making good the ground it hath got by hardness, is not from its nature, but its deceitfulness. Now nothing can prevent this, but mortification. That withers the root and strikes at the head of sin every hour, so that it is crossed in whatever it aims at. There is not the best saint in the world, but, if he should give over this duty, would fall into as many cursed sins as ever any did of his kind.

4. This is one main reason why the Spirit and the new nature are given unto us, that we may have a principle within, whereby to oppose sin and lust. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Well, and what then? Why, "the Spirit also lusteth against the flesh," Gal. v. 17. There is a propensity in the Spirit, or spiritual new nature, to be acting against the flesh, as well as in the flesh to be acting against the Spirit. So 2 Pet. i. 4, 5; it is our "participation of the Divine nature," that gives us an "escape from the pollutions that are in the world through lust:" and there is a law of the mind, as well as a law of the members, Rom. vii. 23. Now this is, first, the most unjust and unreasonable thing in the world; when two combatants are engaged, to bind one, and keep him up from doing his utmost, and to leave the other at liberty to wound him at his pleasure: and, second, the foolishest thing in the world, to bind him who fights for our eternal condition, and to let him alone who seeks and violently attempts our everlasting ruin. The contest is for our lives and souls. Not to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin, is to neglect that excellent succour which God hath given us against our greatest enemy. If

we neglect to make use of what we have received, God may justly hold his hand from giving us more. His graces, as well as his gifts, are bestowed on us to use, exercise, and trade with. Not to be daily mortifying sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God, who hath furnished us with a principle of doing it.

5. Negligence in this duty casts the soul into a perfectly contrary condition to that which the apostle affirms was his; "though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day," 2 Cor. iv. 16. In these, the inward man perisheth, and the outward man is renewed day by day. Sin is as the house of David, and grace as the house of Saul. Exercise and success are the two main cherishers of grace in the heart: when it is suffered to lie still, it withers and decays; the things of it are ready to die, and sin gets ground towards the hardening of the heart, Rev. iii. 2; Heb. iii. 13. This is that which I intend; by the omission of this duty, grace withers, lust flourisheth, and the frame of the heart grows worse and worse: and the Lord knows what desperate and fearful issues it hath had with many. Where sin, through the neglect of mortification, gets a considerable victory, it breaks the bones of the soul, Psa. xxxi. 10; li. 8; and makes a man weak, sick, and ready to die, Psa. xxxviii. 3—5, so that he cannot look up, Psa. xl. 12; Isa. xxxiii. 24. And when poor creatures will take blow after blow, wound after wound, foil after foil, and never rouse up themselves to a vigorous opposition, can they expect any thing but to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that their souls should bleed to death? 2 John 8. Indeed, it is a sad

thing to consider the fearful issues of this neglect, which lie under our eyes every day. See we not those, whom we knew humble, melting, broken-hearted Christians, tender and fearful to offend, zealous for God and all his ways, his sabbaths and ordinances, grown, through a neglect of watching unto this duty, earthly, carnal, cold, wrathful, complying with the men of the world and things of the world, to the scandal of religion, and the fearful temptation of them that know them? The truth is, what between placing mortification in a rigid, stubborn frame of spirit, which is, for the most part, earthly, legal, censorious, partial, consistent with wrath, envy, malice, pride, on the one hand, and pretences of liberty, grace, and I know not what, on the other, true evangelical mortification is almost lost amongst us: of which afterwards.

6. It is our duty to be perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, 2 Cor. vii. 1; to be growing in grace every day, 1 Pet. ii. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 18; to be renewing our inward man day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Now, this cannot be done without the daily mortifying of sin: sin sets its strength against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness, who walks not over the neck of his lusts. He, who doth not kill sin in his way, takes no steps towards his journey's end. He, who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself in every particular to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it.

This, then, is the first general principle of our ensuing discourse. Notwithstanding the meritorious mortification, if I may so speak, of all and every sin in the cross of Christ; notwithstanding

the real foundation of universal mortification laid in our first conversion, by conviction of sin, humiliation for sin, and the implantation of a new principle, opposite to it, and destructive of it; yet sin doth so remain, so act and work in the best of believers whilst they live in this world, that the constant daily mortification of it is all their days incumbent on them. Before I proceed to the consideration of the next principle, I cannot but complain, by the way, of many professors of these days; who, instead of bringing forth such great and evident fruits of mortification as are expected, scarce bear any leaves of it. There is, indeed, a broad light fallen upon the men of this generation, and together therewith many spiritual gifts communicated; which, with some other considerations, have wonderfully enlarged the bounds of professors and profession; both they and it are exceedingly multiplied and increased. Hence, there is noise of religion and religious duties in every corner: preaching in abundance; and that not in an empty, light, trivial, and vain manner, as formerly, but in a good proportion of a spiritual gift: so that if you will measure the number of believers by light, gifts, and profession, the church may have cause to say, "Who hath borne me all these?" But now, if you will take the measure of them by this great discriminating grace of Christians, perhaps you will find their number not so multiplied. Where, almost, is that professor who owes his conversion to these days of light, and so talks and professes at such a rate of spirituality as few in former days were in any measure acquainted with, (I will not judge them, but,) perhaps boasting what the Lord

hath done in them—that doth not give evidence of a miserably unmortified heart? If vain spending of time, idleness, unprofitableness in men's places, envy, strife, variance, emulations, wrath, pride, worldliness, selfishness, be badges of Christians, we have them on us and amongst us in abundance. And if it be so with them who have so much light, and which we hope is saving, what shall we say of some who would be accounted religious, and yet despise gospel light, and, as for the duty we have in hand, know no more of it, than what consists in men's denying themselves sometimes in outward enjoyments, which is one of the outmost branches of it, and which yet they will seldom practise? The good Lord send out a spirit of mortification to cure our distempers, or we are in a sad condition!

There are two evils which certainly attend every unmortified professor; the first in himself, and the other in respect of others.

1. In himself. Let him pretend what he will, he hath slight thoughts of sin; at least of sins of daily infirmity. The root of an unmortified course, is the digestion of sin, without bitterness in the heart. When a man hath fixed his imagination to such an apprehension of grace and mercy, as to be able, without bitterness, to swallow and digest daily sins, that man is at the very brink of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Neither is there a greater evidence in the world of a false and rotten heart, than to drive such a trade. To use, for the countenancing of sin, the blood of Christ, which is given to cleanse us, 1 John i. 7; Tit. ii. 14; the exaltation of Christ, which is to

give us repentance, Acts v. 31; the doctrine of grace, which teaches us to deny all ungodliness, Tit. ii. 11, 12; is a rebellion, that, in the issue, will break the bones. At this door have gone out from us most of the professors that have apostatized in the days wherein we live. For a while they were most of them under convictions; these kept them unto duties, and brought them to profession. So they "escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. ii. 20. But having got an acquaintance with the doctrine of the gospel, and being weary of duty for which they had no principle, they began, from the doctrine of grace, to countenance themselves in manifold neglects. Now when once this evil had laid hold of them, they speedily tumbled into perdition.

2. Upon others it hath an evil influence, on a two-fold account.

(1.) It hardens them, by begetting in them a persuasion that they are in as good condition as the best professors. Whatever they see in them is so stained, for want of this mortification, that it is of no value with them. They have zeal for religion; but it is accompanied with want of forbearance and universal righteousness. They deny prodigality, but with worldliness: they separate from the world, but live wholly to themselves, taking no care to exercise loving-kindness in the earth. Or they talk spiritually, and live vainly; mention communion with God, and are every way conformed to the world; boasting of forgiveness of sin, and never forgiving others: and with such considerations do poor creatures harden their hearts in their unregeneracy.

(2.) They deceive them, in making them believe, that if they can come up to their condition it shall be well with them. And so it grows an ordinary thing to have the great temptation of repute in religion to wrestle withal; when they may go far beyond them, as to what appears in them, and yet come short of eternal life. But of these things, and all the evils of unmortified walking, afterwards.

CHAP. III.

The second general principle of the means of mortification proposed to confirmation. The Spirit the only author of this work. Vanity of popish mortification discovered. Many means of it used by them not appointed of God. Those appointed by him abused. The mistakes of others in this business. The Spirit is promised believers for this work, Ezek. xi. 19; xxxvi. 26. *All that we receive from Christ is by the Spirit. How the Spirit mortifies sin,* Gal. v. 19—23. *The several ways of his operations to this end proposed. How his work, and our duty.*

II. The next principle relates to the great sovereign cause of the mortification treated of, which, in the words laid for the foundation of this discourse, is said to be the Spirit, that is, the Holy Ghost, as was evinced.

He only is sufficient for this work. All ways and means without him are as a thing of nought; and he is the great efficient of it; he "works in us as he pleases."

1. In vain do men seek other remedies; they shall not be healed by them. What several ways

have been prescribed for this, to have sin mortified, is known. The greatest part of popish religion, of that which looks most like religion in their profession, consists in mistaken ways and means of mortification. This is the pretence of their "rough garments," whereby they deceive. Their vows, orders, fastings, penances, are all built on this ground; they are all for the mortifying of sin. Their preachings, sermons, and books of devotion, look all this way. Hence those who interpret the "locusts" that came out of the "bottomless pit," (Rev. ix. 2,) to be the friars of the Romish church, who are said to torment men, so that "they should seek death and not find it," (ver. 6,) think, that they did it by their stinging sermons, whereby they convinced them of sin, but being not able to discover the remedy for the healing and mortifying of it, they kept them in such perpetual anguish and terror, and such trouble in their consciences, that they "desired to die." This, I say, is the substance and glory of their religion. But what with their labouring to mortify dead creatures, ignorant of the nature and end of the work; what with the poison they mixed with it, in their persuasion of its merit, yea, supererogation, as they style their unnecessary merit, with a proud, barbarous title; their glory is their shame. But of them and their mortification, more afterwards, chap. viii.

That the ways and means to be used for the mortification of sin, invented by them, are still insisted on and prescribed for the same end by some who should have more light and knowledge of the gospel, is known. Such directions to this purpose have of late been given by some, and are

greedily catched at by others, professing themselves Protestants, as might have become popish devotionists three or four hundred years ago. Such outside endeavours, such bodily exercises, such self-performances, such merely legal duties, without the least mention of Christ or his Spirit, are varnished over with swelling words of vanity as the only means and expedients for the mortification of sin, so as to discover a deep-rooted unacquaintedness with the power of God and mystery of the gospel. The consideration hereof was one motive to the publishing of this plain discourse.

Now, the reasons why the Papists can never, with all their endeavours, truly mortify any one sin, are these, amongst others.

(1.) Because many of the ways and means they use and insist upon for this end, were never appointed of God for that purpose. Now there is nothing in religion that hath any efficacy for compassing an end, but it hath it from God's appointment of it to that purpose. Such as these are their rough garments, their vows, penances, disciplines, their course of monastical life, and the like, concerning all of them God will say, "Who hath required these things at your hands?" and "In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men." Of the same nature are sundry self-vexations, insisted on by others.

(2.) Because those things that are appointed of God as means, are not used by them in their due place and order; such as praying, fasting, watching, meditation, and the like: these have their use in the business in hand. But whereas they are all to be looked on as streams, they look on

them as the fountain. Whereas they affect and accomplish the end only as means subordinate to the Spirit and faith, they look to them to do it by virtue of the work wrought. If they fast so much, and pray so much, and keep their hours and times, the work is done. As the apostle says of some in another case, "they are always learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth;" so, they are always mortifying, but never come to any sound mortification. In a word, they have sundry means to mortify the natural man as to the natural life we here lead; none to mortify lust or corruption.

This is the general mistake of men, ignorant of the gospel, about this thing; and it lies at the bottom of very much of that superstition and will-worship that hath been brought into the world. What horrible self-macerations were practised by some of the ancient authors of monastical devotion! What violence did they offer to nature! What extremity of sufferings did they put themselves upon! Search their ways and principles to the bottom, and you will find, that they had no other root but this mistake; namely, that, attempting rigid mortification, they fell upon the natural man instead of the corrupt old man; upon the body wherein we live, instead of the body of death.

Neither will the natural popery that is in others do it. Men are galled with the guilt of a sin that hath prevailed over them; they instantly promise to themselves and God, that they will do so no more; they watch over themselves and pray for a season, until this heat waxes cold, and the sense of sin is worn off; and so mortification goes also,

and sin returns to its former dominion. Duties are excellent food for a healthy soul; they are no physic for a sick soul. He that turns his meat into his medicine, must expect no great operation. Spiritually sick men cannot sweat out their distemper with working. But this is the way of men who deceive their own souls; as we shall see afterwards.

That none of these ways are sufficient, is evident from the nature of the work itself that is to be done; it is a work that requires so many concurrent actings in it, as no self-endeavour can reach unto; and is of such a kind that an almighty energy is necessary for its accomplishment, as shall be afterwards manifested.

2. It is, then, the work of the Spirit. For,

(1.) He is promised of God to be given to us, to do this work. The taking away of the stony heart, that is, the stubborn, proud, rebellious, unbelieving heart, is, in general, the work of mortification that we treat of. Now this is still promised to be done by the Spirit, "I will give my Spirit, and take away the stony heart," Ezek. xi. 19; xxxvi. 26: and by the Spirit of God is this work wrought, when all means fail, Isa. lvii. 17, 18.

(2.) We have all our mortification from the gift of Christ, and all the gifts of Christ are communicated to us, and given us, by the Spirit of Christ. "Without Christ we can do nothing," John xv. 5. All communications of supplies and relief, in the beginnings, increasings, actings of any grace whatever from him, are by the Spirit, by whom he alone works in and upon believers. From him we have our mortification. "He i

exalted, and made a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto us," Acts v. 31; and of our repentance our mortification is no small portion. How doth he do it? Having received the promise of the Holy Ghost, he sends him abroad for that end, Acts ii. 33. You know the manifold promises he made of sending the Spirit, as Tertullian speaks, to do the works that he had to accomplish in us.

The resolution of one or two questions will now lead me nearer to what I principally intend. The first is,

Qu. How doth the Spirit mortify sin?

Ans. In general, three ways.

(1.) By causing our hearts to abound in grace, and the fruits that are contrary to the flesh and the fruits thereof, and to the principles of them. So the apostle opposes the fruits of the flesh and of the Spirit: the fruits of the flesh, says he, are so and so, Gal. v. 19, 20; but, says he, the fruits of the Spirit are quite contrary, quite of another sort, ver. 22, 23. Yea, but what if these are in us and do abound; may not the other abound also? No, says he, ver. 24; "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." But how? Why, ver. 25, by "living in the Spirit, and walking after the Spirit;" that is, by the abounding of these graces of the Spirit in us, and walking according to them. For, saith the apostle, ver. 17, "these are contrary one to another," so that they cannot both be in the same subject, in any intense or high degree. This renewing of us by the Holy Ghost, as it is called, Titus iii. 5, is one great way of mortification: he causes us to grow, thrive,

flourish, and abound in those graces which are contrary, opposite, and destructive to all the fruits of the flesh, and to the quiet or thriving of indwelling sin itself.

(2.) By a real, physical efficiency on the root and habit of sin, for the weakening, destroying, and taking it away. Hence he is called a "Spirit of judgment and burning," Isa. iv. 4, really consuming and destroying our lusts. He takes away the stony heart by an almighty efficiency; for as he begins the work as to its kind, so he carries it on as to its degrees. He is the fire which burns up the very root of lust.

(3.) He brings the cross of Christ into the heart of a sinner by faith, and gives us communion with Christ in his death, and fellowship in his sufferings; of the manner whereof more afterwards.

The second is,

Qu. If this be the work of the Spirit alone, how is it that we are exhorted to it? Seeing the Spirit of God only can do it, let the work be left wholly to him.

Ans. 1. It is no otherwise the work of the Spirit, than as all graces and good works which are in us are his. He works in us "to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. "He works all our works in us," Isa. xxvi. 12. "The work of faith with power," 2 Thess. i. 11; Col. ii. 12. He causes us to pray, and is "a Spirit of supplication," Rom. viii. 26; Zech. xii. 10. And yet we are exhorted, and are to be exhorted, to all these.

Ans. 2. He doth not so work our mortification in us, as not to keep it still an act of our obedience. The Holy Ghost works in us, and upon

us, as we are fit to be wrought in and upon; that is, so as to preserve our own liberty and free obedience. He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures: he works in us and with us, not against us or without us: so that his assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself. And indeed, I might here bewail the endless foolish labour of poor souls, who, being convinced of sin, and not able to stand against the power of their convictions, do set themselves by innumerable perplexing ways and duties to keep down sin; but, being strangers to the Spirit of God, all in vain. They combat without victory, have war without peace, and are in slavery all their days. They spend their strength for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which profiteth not.

This is the saddest warfare that any poor creature can be engaged in. A soul under the power of conviction from the law, is pressed to fight against sin, but hath no strength for the combat. They cannot but fight, and they can never conquer; they are like men thrust on the sword of enemies, on purpose to be slain. The law drives them on, and sin beats them back. Sometimes they think indeed that they have foiled sin, when they have only raised a dust so that they see it not; that is, they distemper their natural affections of fear, sorrow, and anguish, which makes them believe that sin is conquered, when it is not touched. By the time they are cold, they must to the battle again; and the lust which they

thought to be slain, appears to have had no wound.

And if the case be so sad with them who labour and strive, and yet enter not into the kingdom, what is their condition who despise all this; who are perpetually under the power and dominion of sin, and love to have it so; and are troubled at nothing but that they cannot make sufficient provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof?

CHAP. IV.

The last principle: Of the usefulness of mortification. The vigour and comfort of our spiritual life depend on our mortification. In what sense? Not absolutely and necessarily. Heman's condition, Psa. lxxxviii. *Not as the next and immediate cause. As a means, by removing the contrary. The desperate effects of unmortified lust: it weakens the soul sundry ways,* Psa. xxxviii. 3, 8, *and darkens it. All graces improved by the mortification of sin. The best evidence of sincerity.*

THE last principle I shall insist on, omitting the necessity of mortification unto life, and the certainty of life upon mortification, is,

III. That the life, vigour, and comfort of our spiritual life, depend much on our mortification of sin.

Strength, and comfort, and power, and peace in our walking with God, are the things of our desires. Were any of us asked seriously, what it is that troubles us, we must refer it to one of

these heads; either we want strength, or power, vigour, and life, in our obedience, in our walking with God; or we want peace, comfort, and consolation therein. Whatever it is that may befall a believer which doth not belong to one of these two heads, deserves not to be mentioned in the days of our complaints. Now all these do much depend on a constant course of mortification; concerning which observe,

1. I do not say they proceed from it, as though they were necessarily tied to it. A man may be carried on in a constant course of mortification all his days, and yet perhaps never enjoy a good day of peace and consolation. So it was with Heman, Psa. lxxxviii. His life was a life of perpetual mortification and walking with God; yet terrors and wounds were his portion all his days. But God singled out Heman, a choice friend, to make him an example to them that afterwards should be in distress. Canst thou complain if it be no otherwise with thee than it was with Heman, that eminent servant of God? and this shall be his praise to the end of the world. God makes it his prerogative to speak peace and consolation, Isa. lvii. 18, 19. I will do that work, says God; I will comfort him, ver. 18. But how? By an immediate work of the new creation: "I create it," says God. The use of means for the obtaining of peace is ours; the bestowing of it is God's prerogative.

2. In the ways instituted by God for giving us life, vigour, courage, and consolation, mortification is not one of the immediate causes of it. It is the privilege of our adoption, made known to our souls, that gives us immediately these things.

The Spirit's "bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God;" his giving us "a new name," and "a white stone," adoption and justification, that is, as to the sense and knowledge of them; these are the immediate causes, in the hand of the Spirit, of these things. But this I say,

3. In our ordinary walking with God, and in an ordinary course of his dealing with us, the vigour and comfort of our spiritual lives depend much on our mortification, not only as an indispensable requisite, but as a thing that hath an effectual influence thereunto. For,

(1.) This alone keeps sin from depriving us of the one and the other. Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things; first, it will weaken the soul, and deprive it of its vigour; secondly, it will darken the soul, and deprive it of its comfort and peace.

[1.] It weakens the soul, and deprives it of its strength. When David had for a while harboured an unmortified lust in his heart, it broke all his bones, and left him no spiritual strength; hence he complained that he was sick, weak, wounded, faint. "There is," saith he, "no soundness in me," Psa. xxxviii. 3; "I am feeble and sore broken," ver. 8; "yea, I cannot so much as look up," Psa. xl. 12. An unmortified lust will drink up the spirit and all the vigour of the soul, and weaken it for all duties.

For, first of all, it untunes and unframes the heart itself, by entangling its affections. It diverts the heart from that spiritual frame that is required for vigorous communion with God. It lays hold on the affections, rendering its object beloved and desirable, and so expelling the love of the Father,

1 John ii. 15; iii. 17. So that the soul cannot say uprightly and truly to God, "Thou art my portion," having something else that it loves. Fear, desire, hope, which are the choice affections of the soul, that should be full of God, will be one way or other entangled with it.

Again, it fills the thoughts with contrivances about it. Thoughts are the great purveyors of the soul, to bring in provision to satisfy its affections; and if sin remain unmortified in the heart, they must ever and anon be making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. They must glaze, adorn, and dress the objects of the flesh, and bring them home to give satisfaction. And this they are able to do, in the service of a defiled imagination, beyond all expression.

Further, it breaks out, and actually hinders duty. The ambitious man must be studying, and the worldling must be working or contriving, and the sensual vain person providing himself for vanity, when they should be engaged in the worship of God.

Were this my present business, to set forth the breaches, ruin, weakness, desolation, that one unmortified lust will bring upon a soul, this discourse must be extended much beyond my intention.

[2.] As sin weakens, so it darkens the soul. It is a cloud, a thick cloud, that spreads itself over the face of the soul, and intercepts all the beams of God's love and favour. It takes away all sense of the privilege of our adoption; and if the soul begins to gather up thoughts of consolation, sin quickly scatters them. Of which afterwards.

Now in this respect do the vigour and power of

our spiritual life depend on our mortification. I is the only means of the removal of that which will allow us neither the one nor the other. Men that are sick and wounded under the power o lust, make many applications for help; they cry to God, when the perplexity of their thoughts overwhelms them; even to God do they cry, but are not delivered: in vain do they use many remedies, they shall not be healed. So Hosea v 13, "Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound," and attempted sundry remedies; nothing will do, until they come, ver. 15, to acknowledge their offence. Men may see their sickness and wounds, but yet if they make not due applications their cure will not be effected.

(2.) Mortification prunes all the graces of God and makes room for them in our hearts to grow The life and vigour of our spiritual lives consis in the vigour and flourishing of the plants of grace in our hearts. Now, as you may see in a garden let there be a precious herb planted, and let th ground be untilled, and weeds grow about it perhaps it will live still, but be a poor, withering unuseful thing. You must look and search fo it, and sometimes can scarce find it; and whe you do, you can scarce know it, whether it be th plant you look for or no: and suppose it be, yo can make no use of it at all. Whereas, let an other of the same kind be set in ground naturall as barren and bad as the other, but let it be we weeded, and every thing that is noxious and hur ful removed from it; it flourishes and thrives you may see it at first look into the garden, an have it for your use when you please. So it with the graces of the Spirit that are planted

our hearts. That is true, that they are still, they abide, in a heart where there is some neglect of mortification; but they are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2, they are withering and decaying. The heart is like the sluggard's field, so overgrown with weeds that you can scarce see the good corn. Such a man may search for faith, love, and zeal, and scarce be able to find any; and if he do discover that these graces are there, still alive and sincere, yet they are so weak, so clogged with lusts, that they are of very little use; they remain indeed, but are ready to die. But now let the heart be cleansed by mortification; the weeds of lust constantly and daily rooted up, as they spring daily, nature being their proper soil; let room be made for grace to thrive and flourish: how will every grace act its part, and be ready for every use and purpose!

(3.) With regard to our peace, as there is nothing that hath any evidence of sincerity without mortification, so I know nothing that hath such an evidence of sincerity in it; which is no small foundation of our peace. Mortification is the soul's vigorous opposition to self; wherein sincerity is most evident.

CHAP. V.

The principal intention of the whole discourse proposed. The first main case of conscience stated. What it is to mortify any sin, negatively considered. Not the utter destruction of it in this life. Not the dissimulation of it. Not the improvement of any natural principle. Not the diversion of it. Not an occasional conquest. Occasional conquests of sin, what, and when. Upon the eruption of sin in time of danger or trouble.

THESE things being premised, I come to my principal intention, of handling some questions or practical cases that present themselves in the business of the mortification of sin in believers. The first, which is the head of all the rest, and whereunto they are reduced, may be considered as lying under the ensuing proposal.

Suppose that a man is a true believer, and yet finds in himself a powerful indwelling sin, leading him captive to the law of it, consuming his heart with trouble, perplexing his thoughts, weakening his soul as to duties of communion with God, disquieting him as to peace, perhaps defiling his conscience, and exposing him to hardening through the deceitfulness of sin: what shall he do? what course shall he take and insist on, for the mortification of this sin, lust, distemper, or corruption to such a degree as that, though it be not utterly destroyed, yet in his contest with it he may be enabled to keep up power, strength, and peace, in communion with God?

In answer to this important inquiry, I shall do these things: FIRST, Show what it is to morti

any sin; and that both negatively and positively, that we be not mistaken in the foundation: SECOND, Give general directions for such things as without which it will be utterly impossible for any one to get any sin truly and spiritually mortified: THIRD, Draw out the particulars whereby this is to be done: in the whole carrying on this consideration, that it is not of the doctrine of mortification in general, but only in reference to the particular case before proposed, that I am treating.

FIRST, Show what it is to mortify a sin.

I. To mortify a sin, is not utterly to kill, root it out, and destroy it, that it should have no more hold at all, nor residence in our hearts. It is true, this is that which is aimed at, but this is not in this life to be accomplished. There is no man that truly sets himself to mortify any sin, but he aims at, intends, desires, its utter destruction, that it should leave neither root nor fruit in the heart or life. He would so kill it that it should never move or stir any more, cry or call, seduce or tempt, to eternity. Its not being, is the thing aimed at. Now, though doubtless there may be attained, by the Spirit and grace of Christ, a wonderful success and eminency of victory against any sin, so that a man may have almost constant triumph over it; yet an utter killing and destruction of it, that it should not be, is not in this life to be expected. This Paul assures us of; "not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect," Phil. iii. 12. He was a choice saint, a pattern for believers, one who, in faith and love and all the fruits of the Spirit, had not his fellow in the world; and on that account he ascribes perfection to himself in comparison of others,

ver. 15. Yet he had not attained; he was no perfect, but was following after. Still a vile bod he had, and we have, that must be changed by th great power of Christ at last, ver. 21. This w would have; but God sees it best for us that w should be complete in nothing in ourselves; tha in all things we might be complete in Christ, whic is best for us, Col. ii. 10.

II. I think I need not say, it is not the dissimu lation of a sin. When a man, on some outwar respects, forsakes the practice of any sin, me perhaps may look on him as a changed man; Go knows that to his former iniquity he hath adde cursed hypocrisy, and is got into a safer path t hell than he was in before. He hath got anothe heart than he had, that is more cunning; not new heart, that is more holy.

III. The mortification of sin consists not in th improvement of a quiet, sedate nature. Som men have an advantage by their natural constitu tion, so far as that they are not exposed to suc violence of unruly passions and tumultuous a fections as many others are. Let, now, these me cultivate and improve their natural frame an temper, by discipline, consideration, and prudenc and they may seem to themselves and others ver mortified men, when perhaps their hearts are standing sink of all abominations. One man, pe haps, is never so much troubled all his life wi anger and passion, nor doth trouble others, another is almost every day; and yet the latt may have done more to the mortification of th sin than the former. Let not such persons t their mortification by things to which their natur temper gives no life or vigour; let them bri

themselves to self-denial, unbelief, envy, or some such spiritual sin, and they will have a better view of themselves.

IV. A sin is not mortified when it is only diverted. Simon Magus for a season left his sorceries; but his covetousness and ambition, that set him on work, remained still, and would be acting another way. Therefore Peter tells him, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness." Notwithstanding the profession thou hast made, notwithstanding thy relinquishment of thy sorceries, thy lust is as powerful as ever in thee; the same lust, only the streams of it are diverted; it now exerts and puts forth itself another way, but it is the old gall of bitterness still. A man may be sensible of a lust, set himself against the eruptions of it, take care that it shall not break forth as it hath done; but in the mean time may suffer the same corrupted habit to vent itself some other way; as he who heals and skins a running sore thinks himself cured, but in the mean time his flesh festereth by the corruption of the same humour, and breaks out in another place. And this diversion, with the alterations that attend it, often befalls men on accounts wholly foreign unto grace. Change of the course of life that a man was in, of relations, interests, designs, may effect it; yea, the very alterations in men's constitutions, occasioned by a natural progress in the course of their lives, may produce such changes as these. Men in age do not usually persist in the pursuit of youthful lusts, although they have never mortified any one of them. And the same is the case in bartering of lusts, and leaving to serve one that a man may serve another. He

that changes pride for worldliness, sensuality fo pharisaism, vanity in himself to the contempt o others; let him not think that he hath mortifiec the sin that he seems to have left. He hath changed his master, but is a servant still.

V. Occasional conquests of sin do not amoun to mortifying it.

There are two occasions, or seasons, wherein a man who is contending with any sin, may seem to himself to have mortified it.

1. When it hath had some sad eruption, to the disturbance of his peace, terror of his conscience dread of scandal, and evident provocation of God This awakens and stirs up all that is in the man it amazes him, fills him with abhorrency of sin and himself for it, sends him to God, makes him cry out as for life, abhor his lust as hell, and se himself against it. The whole man, spiritual and natural, being now awaked, sin shrinks in its head, appears not, but lies as dead before him As when one hath drawn nigh to an army in the night, and hath killed a principal person: instantly the guards awake, men are roused up, and strict inquiry is made after the enemy, who, in the mean time, until the noise and tumult be over, hides himself, or lies like one that is dead yet with firm resolution to do the like mischie again, upon the like opportunity. Upon the sin among the Corinthians, see how they muster up themselves for the surprisal and destruction of it 2 Cor. vii. 11. So it is in a person, when a breach hath been made by his lust upon his conscience, quiet, perhaps credit, in some eruption of actual sin: carefulness, indignation, desire fear, revenge, are all set on work about it and

against it, and lust is quiet for a season, being run down before them: but when the hurry is over, and the inquest past, the thief appears again alive, and is as busy as ever at his work.

2. In a time of some judgment, calamity, or pressing affliction, the heart is then taken up with thoughts and contrivances of flying from the present troubles, fears, and dangers: this, as a convinced person concludes, is to be done only by relinquishment of sin, which gains peace with God. It is the anger of God in every affliction, that galls a convinced person. To be quit of this, men resolve at such times against their sins: sin shall never more have any place in them; they will never again give up themselves to the service of it. Accordingly, sin is quiet, stirs not, seems to be mortified. Not indeed that it hath received any one wound, but merely because the soul hath possessed its faculties, whereby sin should exert itself, with thoughts inconsistent with the motions thereof; which thoughts when they are laid aside, sin returns again to its former life and vigour. So they in Psa. lxxviii. 32—38, are a full instance and description of this frame of spirit whereof I speak. "For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works: therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned, and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast

in his covenant." I no way doubt, but that when they sought and returned, and inquired early after God, they did it with full purpose of heart as to the relinquishment of their sins. That is expressed in the word "returned;" to turn or return to the Lord, is by a relinquishment of sin. This they did early, with earnestness and diligence; but yet their sin was unmortified for all this, ver. 36, 37. And this is the state of many humiliations in the days of affliction; and a great deceit in the hearts of believers themselves, lies oftentimes herein.

These and many other ways there are, whereby poor souls deceive themselves, and suppose they have mortified their lusts, when they live and are mighty, and on every occasion break forth to their disturbance and disquietness.

CHAP. VI.

The mortification of sin in particular described. The several parts and degrees thereof. 1. *The habitual weakening of its root and principle. The power of lust to tempt. Differences of that power to persons and times.* 2. *Constant fighting against sin. The parts thereof considered.* 3. *Success against it. The sum of this discourse.*

WHAT it is to mortify a sin in general, which will make farther way for particular directions, is next to be considered.

The mortification of a lust consists in three things.

I. An habitual weakening of it. Every lust i

a depraved habit or disposition, continually inclining the heart to evil: thence is that description of him who hath no lust truly mortified, Gen. vi. 5, "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." He is always under the power of a strong bent and inclination to sin. And the reason why a natural man is not always, perpetually, in the pursuit of some one lust, night and day, is because he hath many to serve, every one crying to be satisfied: thence he is carried on with great variety, but still in general he lies towards the satisfaction of self.

We will suppose, then, the lust or distemper, whose mortification is inquired after, to be in itself a strong, deeply-rooted, habitual inclination and bent of will and affections unto some actual sin (sin as to the matter of it, though not under that form as considered by the mind); always stirring up imaginations, thoughts, and contrivances about the object of it. Hence men are said to have their hearts set upon evil; the bent of their spirits lies towards it, to make provision for the flesh, Rom. xiii. 4. And a sinful, depraved habit differs from all natural or moral habits whatever, as in many other things, so in this, that whereas they incline the soul gently and suitably to itself, sinful habits impel with violence and impetuousness. Whence lusts are said "to fight" or "wage war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11; "to rebel" or "rise up in war," with that conduct and opposition which is usual therein, Rom. vii. 23; "to lead captive," or effectually to captivate upon success in battle; all works of great violence and impetuousness.

I might manifest fully, from that description we have of it, Rom. vii., how it will darken the mind, extinguish convictions, dethrone reason, interrupt the power and influence of any considerations that may be brought to hamper it, and through all break into a flame. But this is not my present business. Now the first thing in mortification is the weakening of this habit of sin or lust, so that it shall not, with that violence, earnestness, frequency, rise up, conceive, tumultuate, provoke, entice, disquiet, as naturally it is apt to do, James i. 14, 15.

I shall desire to give one caution or rule by the way; and it is this. Though every lust doth, in its own nature, equally, universally incline and impel to sin, yet this must be granted with these two limitations.

The first is, that one lust, or a lust in one man, may receive many accidental improvements, heightenings, and strengthenings, which may give it life, power, and vigour, exceedingly above what another lust, or the same lust that is of the same kind and nature, hath in another man. When a lust falls in with the natural constitution and temper, with a suitable course of life, with occasions or when Satan hath got a fit handle to it to manage it, as he hath a thousand ways to do; that lust grows violent and impetuous above others, or more than the same lust in another man. Then the steams of it so darken the mind, that though a man knows the same things as formerly, yet they have no power nor influence on the will, but corrupt affections and passions are set by it at liberty.

But especially, lust gets strength by temptation when a suitable temptation falls in with a lust, i

gives it a new life, vigour, power, violence, and rage, which it seemed not before to have, or to be capable of. Instances to this purpose might be multiplied; but it is the design of some part of another treatise to evince this observation.

The second is, that some lusts are far more sensible and discernible in their violent actings than others. Paul puts a difference between uncleanness and all other sins; "Flee fornication; every sin that a man doth, is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body," 1 Cor. vi. 18. Hence the motions of that sin are more sensible, more discernible than of others. When the love of the world, perhaps, or the like, is no less habitually predominant in a person than that, yet it makes not so great a combustion in the whole man.

And on this account some men may go, in their own thoughts, and in the eyes of the world, for mortified men, who yet have in themselves no less predominancy of lust than those who cry out with astonishment upon account of its perplexing tumultuatings; yea, than those who have by the power of it been hurried into scandalous sins: only their lusts are in and about things which raise not such a tumult in the soul, about which they are exercised with a calmer frame of spirit; the very fabric of nature being not so nearly concerned in them as in some other.

I say then, that the first thing in mortification is the weakening of this habit, that it shall not impel and tumultuate as formerly, that it shall not entice and draw aside, that it shall not disquiet and perplex; the killing of its life, vigour, promptness and readiness to be stirring. This is called

"crucifying the flesh with the lusts thereof," Gal. v. 24; that is, taking away its blood and spirits that give it strength and power, the wasting of the body of death day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. As a man nailed to the cross first struggles and strives, and cries out with great strength and might, but, as his blood and spirits waste, his strivings are but faint and seldom, his cries low and hoarse, scarce to be heard: so, when a man first sets on a lust or distemper to deal with it, it struggles with great violence to break loose, it cries with earnestness and impatience to be satisfied and relieved; but when, by mortification, the blood and spirits of it are let out, it moves seldom and faintly, cries sparingly, and is scarce heard in the heart: it may have sometimes a dying pang, that makes an appearance of great vigour and strength, but it is quickly over, especially if it be kept from considerable success.

This the apostle describes, Rom. vi., as in the whole chapter, so especially in ver. 6. Sin, saith he, is crucified, it is fastened to the cross. To what end? That the body of death may be destroyed; the power of sin weakened, and abolished by little and little; that "henceforth we should not serve sin," that is, that sin might not incline impel us with such efficacy as to make us servant to it, as it hath done heretofore. And this is spoken not only with respect to carnal and sensual affections, or desires of worldly things; not only in respect of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but also as to the flesh, which is in the mind and will, in that opposition unto God which is in us by nature. Of what nature soever the troubling distemper may be, b

what way soever it act itself out, either by impelling to evil, or hindering from that which is good, the rule is the same. And unless this be done effectually, all after contention will not compass the end aimed at. A man may beat down the bitter fruit from an evil tree, until he is weary; whilst the root abides in strength and vigour, the beating down of the present fruit will not hinder it from bringing forth more. This is the folly of some men. They set themselves with all earnestness and diligence against the appearing eruption of lust; but leaving the principle and root untouched, perhaps unsearched out, they make but little or no progress in this work of mortification.

II. In constant fighting and contending against sin. To be able always to be laying load on sin, is no small degree of mortification. When sin is strong and vigorous, the soul is scarce able to make any head against it. It sighs, and groans, and mourns, and is troubled, as David speaks of himself, but seldom has sin in pursuit. David complains that his sin had "taken fast hold upon him, that he could not look up," Psa. xl. 12. How little then was he able to fight against it! Now sundry things are required unto, and comprised in, this fighting against sin.

1. To know that a man hath such an enemy to deal with, to take notice of it, to consider it as an enemy indeed, and one that is to be destroyed by all means possible, is required hereunto. As I said before, the contest is vigorous and hazardous; it is about the things of eternity. When, therefore, men have slight and transient thoughts of their lusts, it is no great sign that they are mortified, or that they are in a way for their mortification.

This is "every man's knowing the plague of his own heart," 1 Kings viii. 38, without which no other work can be done. It is to be feared that very many have little knowledge of the main enemy that they carry about them in their bosoms. This makes them ready to justify themselves, and to be impatient of reproof or admonition, not knowing that they are in any danger, 2 Chron. xvi. 10.

2. To labour to be acquainted with the ways, wiles, methods, advantages, and occasions of its success, is the beginning of this warfare. So do men deal with enemies. They inquire out their counsels and designs, ponder their ends, consider how and by what means they have formerly prevailed, that they may get the start of them. In this consists the greatest skill in conduct. Take this away, and all waging of war (wherein is the greatest improvement of human wisdom and industry) would be brutish. So do those deal with lust who mortify it indeed. Not only when it is actually vexing, enticing, and seducing; but in their retirements, they consider, This is our enemy, this is his way and progress, these are his advantages, thus hath he prevailed, and thus he will do if not prevented. So David; "My sin is ever before me," Psa. li. 3. And indeed, one of the choicest and most eminent parts of practical spiritual wisdom, consists in finding out the subtleties, policies, and depths of any indwelling sin. To consider and know wherein its greatest strength lies; what advantage it is wont to make of occasions, opportunities, temptations; what are its pleas, pretences, reasonings; what its stratagems, colours, excuses; to set the wisdom of th

Spirit against the craft of the old man; to trace this serpent in all its turnings and windings; to be able to say at its most secret and (to a common frame of heart) imperceptible actings, This is your old way and course, I know what you aim at; and so to be always in readiness; this is a good part of our warfare.

3. To load it daily with all the things which shall after be mentioned, that are grievous, killing, and destructive to it, is the height of this contest. Such a one never thinks his lust dead because it is quiet; but labours still to give it new wounds, new blows, every day. So the apostle, Col. iii. 5.

Now whilst the soul is in this condition, whilst it is thus dealing, it is certainly uppermost; sin is under the sword, and dying.

Mortification consists,

III. In success: frequent success against any lust is another part and evidence of mortification. By success, I understand not a mere disappointment of sin, that it be not brought forth nor accomplished; but a victory over it, and pursuit of it, to a complete conquest: for instance, when, finding sin at any time at work, seducing, forming imaginations to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, the heart instantly apprehends sin, and brings it to the law of God and love of Christ, condemns it, follows it with execution to the uttermost.

Now I say, when a man comes to this state and condition that lust is weakened in the root and principle, that its motions and actions are fewer and weaker than formerly, so that they are not able to hinder his duty nor interrupt his peace;

when he can, in a quiet, sedate frame of spirit find out and fight against sin, and have succes against it; then sin is mortified in some consider able measure, and notwithstanding all its opposi tion, a man may have peace with God all his days

Unto these heads, then, do I refer the mortifi cation aimed at; that is, of any one perplexing distemper, whereby the general pravity and cor ruption of our nature attempts to exert and pu forth itself. First, the foundation of it is, the weakening of its indwelling disposition, whereby it inclines, entices, impels to evil, rebels, opposes fights against God; by the implanting, habitua residence, and cherishing, of a principle of grace that stands in direct opposition to it, and is de structive of it. So, by the implanting and growth of humility, is pride weakened, passion by pa tience, uncleanness by purity of mind and con science, love of this world by heavenly-minded ness; which are graces of the Spirit, or the sam habitual grace variously acting itself by the Holy Ghost, according to the variety or diversity of th objects about which it is exercised; even as th other are several lusts, or the same natural cor ruption variously acting itself, according to th various advantages and occasions that it meet withal. Secondly, the promptness, alacrity, vi gour of the Spirit, or new man, in contendin with, cheerfully fighting against, the lust spoke of, by all the ways and with all the means tha are appointed thereunto. Constantly using th succours provided against its motions and acting is a second thing hereunto required. Thirdly success, unto several degrees, attends these two Now this, if the distemper hath not an unconque

able advantage from its natural situation, may possibly be to such a universal conquest, as that the soul may, never more, sensibly feel its opposition; but at least, that it shall assuredly arise to an allowance of peace to the conscience, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace.

CHAP. VII.

General rules, without which no lust will be mortified. No mortification unless a man be a believer. Dangers of attempting mortification of sin by unregenerate persons. The duty of unconverted persons, as to this business of mortification, considered. The vanity of the papists' attempts, and rules for mortification thence discovered.

THE ways and means come next to be considered, whereby a soul may proceed to the mortification of any particular lust and sin, of which Satan takes advantage to disquiet and weaken him.

Now there are some general considerations to be premised, concerning some principles and foundations of this work, without which no man in the world, be he ever so much raised by convictions, and resolved for the mortification of any sin, can attain thereunto: which was the second thing before proposed.

SECOND. General rules and principles, without which no sin will ever be mortified, are these:

I. Unless a man be a believer, that is, one that is truly ingrafted into Christ, he can never mortify any one sin. I do not say, unless he knows himself to be so, but unless he indeed be so. Mortification is the work of believers; "if ye through

the Spirit," &c., Rom. viii. 13; ye believers, to whom there is no condemnation, ver. 1. They alone are exhorted to it, Col. iii. 5; "Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth." Who should mortify? You who are risen with Christ, ver. 1; whose life is hid with Christ in God, ver. 3; who shall appear with him in glory ver. 4. An unregenerate man may do something like it; but the work itself, so as it may be acceptable with God, he can never perform. You know what a picture of it is drawn in some of the philosophers, Seneca, Tully, Epictetus; what affectionate discourses they have of the contempt of the world and self, of regulating and conquering all exorbitant affections and passions. The lives of most of them manifested, that their maxims differed as much from true mortification, as the sun painted on a sign-post from the sun in the firmament. They had neither light nor heat. Their own Lucian sufficiently manifests what they all were. There is no death of sin, without the death of Christ. You know what attempts there are made after it by the papists, in their vows, penances, and satisfactions; I dare say of them (I mean as many of them as act upon the principles of their church, as they call it,) what Paul says of Israel in point of righteousness, Rom. ix. 31, 32, They have followed after mortification but they have not attained to it. Wherefore? Because they "seek it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." The same is the state and condition of all amongst ourselves, who, in obedience to their convictions and awakened consciences, do attempt a relinquishment of sin; they follow after it, but they do not attain it.

It is true that it is, it will be, required of every person whatever that hears the law or gospel preached, that he mortify sin: it is his duty, but it is not his immediate duty; it is his duty to do it, but to do it in God's way. If you require your servant to pay so much money for you in such a place, but first to go and take it up in another, it is his duty to pay the money appointed, and you will blame him if he do it not: yet it was not his immediate duty; he was first to take it up, according to your direction. So it is in this case; sin is to be mortified, but something is to be done in the first place to enable us thereunto.

I have proved, that it is the Spirit alone that can mortify sin. He is promised to do it, and all other means without him are empty and vain. How shall he, then, mortify sin, who hath not the Spirit? A man may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, than truly mortify one sin without the Spirit. Now, how is he attained? It is the Spirit of Christ; and, as the apostle says, "if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his," Rom. viii. 9; so, if we are Christ's, have an interest in him, we have the Spirit, and so alone have power for mortification. This the apostle discourses of at large, Rom. viii. 5—8. "So then," ver. 8, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." This is the inference and conclusion he makes of his foregoing discourse about our natural state and condition, and the enmity we have unto God and his law therein. If we are in the flesh, if we have not the Spirit, we cannot do any thing that should please God. But what is our deliverance from this condition? "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that

the Spirit of God dwell in you," ver. 9; ye believers, that have the Spirit of Christ, ye are not in the flesh. There is no way of deliverance from the state and condition of being in the flesh, but by the Spirit of Christ. And what if this Spirit of Christ be in you? Why then you are mortified, ver. 10, "the body is dead because of sin," or unto it; mortification is carried on; the new man is quickened to righteousness. This the apostle proves, ver. 11, from the union we have with Christ by the Spirit, which will produce operations in us suitable to what it wrought in him. All attempts, then, for mortification of any lust, without an interest in Christ, are vain. Many men that are galled with sin, and for it, (the arrows of Christ for conviction, by the preaching of the word or some affliction, having been made sharp in their hearts,) do vigorously set themselves against this or that particular lust, wherewith their consciences have been most disquieted or perplexed. But, poor creatures! they labour in the fire, and their work consumeth. When the Spirit of Christ comes to this work, he will be "as a refiner's fire and as fuller's soap," and he will "purge men as gold and silver," Mal. iii. 3; he will take away their "dross and tin," their "filth and blood," Isa. i. 25; iv. 3. But men must be gold and silver at bottom, or else refining will do them no good. The prophet gives us the sad issue of wicked men's utmost attempts for mortification by what means soever God affords them; "The bellows are burned, and the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them," Jer. vi. 29, 30. And what is the

reason hereof? They were brass and iron when they were put into the furnace, ver. 28. Men may refine brass and iron long enough before they will be good silver.

I say then, mortification is not the present business of unregenerate men. God calls them not to it as yet. Conversion is their work; the conversion of the whole soul, not the mortification of this or that particular lust. You would laugh at a man that you see setting up a great fabric, and never taking any care for a foundation; especially if you should see him so foolish, as that, having a thousand experiences that what he built one day fell down another, he would yet continue in the same course. So it is with convinced persons: though they plainly see that what ground they get against sin one day they lose another, yet they will go on in the same road still, without inquiring where the destructive flaw in their progress lies. When the Jews, upon the conviction of their sin, were cut to the heart, Acts ii. 37, and cried out, "What shall we do?" what doth Peter direct them to? Does he bid them go and mortify their pride, wrath, malice, cruelty, and the like? No, he knew that was not their present work; but he calls them to conversion, and faith in Christ in general, ver. 38. Let their souls be first thoroughly converted, and then, looking on him whom they have pierced, humiliation and mortification will ensue. Thus when John came to preach repentance and conversion, he said, "The axe is now laid unto the root of the tree," Matt. iii. 10. The Pharisees had been laying heavy burdens, imposing tedious duties and rigid means of mortification, in fastings, washings, and

the like; all in vain. Says John, The doctrine of conversion is for you; the axe in my hand is laid to the root. And our Saviour tells us what is to be done in this case; "Do men," says he, "gather grapes of thorns?" Matt. vii. 16. But suppose a thorn be well pruned and cut, and have pains taken with him? Yea, but he will never bear figs, ver. 17, 18; it cannot be but every tree will bring forth fruit according to its own kind. What is then to be done? He tells us, Matt. xii. 33, "Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good." The root must be dealt with, the nature of the tree changed, or no good fruit will be brought forth.

This is that I aim at. Unless a man be regenerate, unless he be a believer, all attempts that he can make for mortification, be they ever so specious and promising; all means he can use, let him follow them with ever so much diligence, earnestness, watchfulness, and contention of mind and spirit; are to no purpose. In vain shall he use many remedies, he shall not be healed. Yea, there are sundry desperate evils attending an endeavour in convinced persons, that are no more but so, to perform this duty.

1. The mind and soul are taken up about that which is not the man's proper business, and so he is diverted from that which is. God lays hold, by his word and judgments, on some sin in him; galls his conscience, disquiets his heart, deprives him of his rest: now other diversions will not serve his turn; he must apply himself to the work before him. The business in hand being to awake the whole man to a consideration of the state and condition wherein he is, that he might

be brought home to God; instead hereof, he sets himself to mortify the sin that galls him; which is a pure issue of self-love, that he may be freed from his trouble, and not at all the work he is called unto; and so he is diverted from it. Thus God tells us of Ephraim, when he "spread his net upon them," and "brought them down as the fowls of heaven, and chastised them," Hos. vii. 12, when he caught them, entangled them, convinced them, so that they could not escape: saith he of them, "They return, but not to the Most High;" they set themselves to a relinquishment of sin, but not in that manner as God called for it, by universal conversion. Thus are men diverted from coming unto God in the most glorious ways that they can fix upon to come to him by. And this is one of the most common deceits whereby men ruin their own souls. I wish that some whose trade it is to daub with untempered mortar in the things of God, did not teach this deceit, and cause the people to err by their ignorance. What do men do? what, ofttimes, are they directed unto, when their consciences are galled by sin, and disquietment from the Lord hath laid hold upon them? Is not a relinquishment, in practice, of the sin with which, in some fruits of it, they are perplexed, and to make head against, the sum of what they apply themselves unto? And is not the gospel end of their convictions lost thereby? Here men abide and perish.

2. This duty, in its proper place, being a good thing in itself, a duty evidencing sincerity, bringing home peace to the conscience; a man, finding himself really engaged in it, his mind and heart set against this or that sin, with purpose and

resolution to have no more to do with it, is ready to conclude that his state and condition is good, and so to delude his own soul. For,

(1.) When his conscience hath been made sick with sin, and he could find no rest; when he should go to the great Physician of souls, and get healing in his blood, the man pacifies and quiets his conscience by this engagement against sin, and sits down without going to Christ at all. Ah! how many poor souls are thus deluded to eternity! When "Ephraim saw his sickness, he sent to king Jareb," which kept him off from God, Hos. v. 13. The whole bundle of the popish religion is made up of designs and contrivances to pacify conscience without Christ; all described by the apostle, Rom. x. 4.

(2.) By this means men satisfy themselves that their state and condition is good, seeing they do that which is a work good in itself, and they do not do it to be seen. They know they would have the work done in sincerity, and so are hardened in a kind of self-righteousness.

3. When a man hath thus for a season been deluded, and hath deceived his own soul, and finds, in a long course of life, that indeed his sin is not mortified, or that if he hath changed one, he hath gotten another; he begins at length to think, that all contending is in vain, that he shall never be able to prevail; he is making a dam against water that increaseth on him. Hereupon he gives over, as one despairing of any success and yields up himself to the power of sin, and that habit of formality that he hath gotten.

And this is the usual issue with persons attempting the mortification of sin, without an in-

terest in Christ first obtained. It deludes them, hardens them, destroys them. And therefore we see that, usually, there are not more vile and desperate sinners in the world than such as, having by conviction been put on this course, have found it fruitless, and deserted it without a discovery of Christ. And this is the substance of the religion and godliness of the choicest formalists in the world; and of all those who, in the Roman synagogue, are drawn to mortification as they drive Indians to baptism, or cattle to water. I say then, that mortification is the work of believers, and believers only. To kill sin is the work of living men; where men are dead, as are all unbelievers, even the best of them, sin is alive, and will live. It is the work of faith, the peculiar work of faith; now if there be a work to be done that will be effected by one only instrument, it is the greatest madness for any to attempt the doing of it who hath not that instrument. Now it is faith that purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9; or, as Peter speaks, "we purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," 1 Pet. i. 22; and without it, it will not be done.

What hath been spoken, I suppose, is sufficient to make good my first general rule, Be sure to get an interest in Christ, if you intend to mortify any sin; without it, it will never be done.

Object. You will say, What then would you have unregenerate men, that are convinced of the evil of sin, to do? Shall they cease striving against sin, live dissolutely, give their lusts their swing, and be as bad as the worst of men? This were a way to set the whole world into confusion, to bring all things into darkness, to set

open the flood-gates of lusts, and lay the rein upon the necks of men to rush into all sin with delight and greediness, like the horse into the battle.

Ans. 1. God forbid! It is to be looked on as a great issue of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God, that, by manifold ways and means, he is pleased to restrain the sons of men from running forth into that compass of excess and riot, which the depravity of their nature would carry them out unto with violence. By what way soever this is done, it is an issue of the care, kindness and goodness of God, without which the whole earth would be a hell of sin and confusion.

Ans. 2. There is a peculiar convincing power in the word, which God is oftentimes pleased to put forth, to the wounding, amazing, and, in some sort, humbling of sinners, though they are never converted. And the word is to be preached, yea not with this end, though it hath this end. Let then, the word be preached, and the sins of men rebuked; lust will be restrained, and some oppositions will be made against sin, though that be not the effect aimed at.

Ans. 3. Though this be the work of the word and Spirit, and it be good in itself, yet it is not profitable nor available as to the main end in them in whom it is wrought; they are still in the gall of bitterness, and under the power of darkness.

Ans. 4. Let men know it is their duty, but in its proper place. I take not men from mortification, but put them upon conversion. He that shall call a man from mending a hole in the wall of his house, to quench a fire that is consuming

the whole building, is not his enemy. Poor soul! it is not thy sore finger, but thy hectic fever, that thou art to apply thyself to the consideration of. Thou settest thyself against a particular sin, and dost not consider that thou art nothing but sin.

Let me add this to them who are preachers of the word, or intend through the good hand of God that employment. It is their duty to plead with men about their sins, and to lay load on particular sins; but always to remember, that it be done with that which is the proper end of law and gospel: that is, that they make use of the sin they speak against, to the discovery of the state and condition wherein the sinner is. Otherwise, they may haply work men to formality and hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought about. It will not avail to beat a man off from his drunkenness into a sober formality: a skilful master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root, drives still at the heart. To inveigh against particular sins of ignorant, unregenerate persons, such as the land is full of, is a good work: but yet, though it may be done with great efficacy, vigour, and success, if all the effect of it be this, that they are set upon the most sedulous endeavours to mortify their sins preached down, all that is done is but like the beating of an enemy in an open field, and driving him into an impregnable castle not to be prevailed against. Get you a sinner at any time at the advantage on account of any one sin whatever; have you any thing to take hold of him by; bring it to his state and condition, drive it up to the head, and there deal with him. To break

men off from particular sins, and not to breal their hearts, is to deprive ourselves of advantage of dealing with them.

And herein is the Roman mortification griev ously faulty; they drive all sorts of persons to it without the least consideration whether they hav a principle for it or no. Yea, they are so far fron calling on men to believe, in order that they ma be able to mortify their lusts, that they call me to mortification instead of believing. The trut is, they neither know what it is to believe, no what mortification itself intends. Faith wit them is but a general assent to the doctrin taught in their church; and mortification, the be taking of a man by a vow to some certain cours of life, wherein he denies himself something c the use of the things of this world, not without considerable compensation. Such men know ne ther the Scriptures nor the power of God. Thei boasting of their mortification is but their glory ing in their shame. Some casuists among ou selves, who, overlooking the necessity of regene ation, do avowedly give this for a direction to a sorts of persons who complain of any sin or lus that they should vow against it, at least for a sea son, a month or so, seem to have a scantling c light in the mystery of the gospel, much like th of Nicodemus when he came first to Chris They bid men vow to abstain from their sin for season. This commonly makes their lust mo impetuous. Perhaps with great perplexity the keep their word; perhaps not, which increas their guilt and torment. Is their sin at all mo tified hereby? Do they find a conquest over i Is their condition changed, though they attain

relinquishment of it? Are they not still in the gall of bitterness? Is not this to put men to make brick, if not without straw, yet, which is worse, without strength? What promise hath any unregenerate man to countenance him in this work? What assistance for the performance of it? Can sin be killed without an interest in the death of Christ, or mortified without the Spirit? If such directions should prevail to change men's lives, as seldom they do, yet they never reach to the change of their hearts or conditions. They make men self-justifiers or hypocrites, not Christians. It grieves me ofttimes to see poor souls, that have a zeal for God and a desire of eternal welfare, kept, by such directors and directions, under a hard, burdensome, outside worship and service of God, with many specious endeavours for mortification, in an utter ignorance of the righteousness of Christ, and unacquaintedness with his Spirit, all their days. Persons and things of this kind, I know too many. If ever God shine into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son Jesus Christ, they will see the folly of their present way.

CHAP. VIII.

The second general rule proposed. Without universal sin cerity for the mortifying of every lust, no lust will b mortified. Partial mortification always from a corrup principle. Perplexity of temptation from a lust, ofttime a chastening for other negligences.

II. The second principle which I shall propose to this purpose, is this, Without sincerity and dili gence in a universality of obedience, there is no mortification of any one perplexing lust to be ob tained. The former was to the person, this to the thing itself. I shall a little explain this position.

A man finds any lust to bring him into the con dition formerly described; it is powerful, strong tumultuating, leads captive, vexes, disquiets, take away peace. He is not able to bear it; where fore he sets himself against it, prays against it groans under it, sighs to be delivered. But in the mean time, perhaps, in other duties, in con stant communion with God, in reading, prayer and meditation, in other ways that are not of th same kind with the lust wherewith he is troubled he is loose and negligent. Let not that man think that ever he shall arrive to the mortification of th lust he is perplexed with. This is a conditio that not seldom befalls men in their pilgrimage The Israelites, under a sense of their sin, drew nigh to God with much diligence and earnestness with fasting and prayer, Isa. lviii. Many ex pressions are used of their earnestness in the work ver. 2: "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways; they ask of me the ordinances of jus

tice; they delight in approaching unto God." But God rejects all; their fast is a remedy that will not heal them: and the reason given of it, ver. 5—7, is, because they were exclusive in this duty; they attended diligently to it, but in others were negligent and careless. He that hath (it is the Scripture expression) a running sore upon him, arising from an ill habit of body contracted by intemperance and ill diet, let him apply himself with what diligence and skill he can to the cure of his sore, if he leave the general habit of his body under distempers, his labour and travail will be in vain. So will his attempts be, that shall endeavour to stop a bloody issue of sin and filth in his soul, and is not equally careful of his universal spiritual temperament and constitution. For,

1. This kind of endeavour for mortification proceeds from a corrupt principle, ground, and foundation; so that it will never proceed to a good issue. The true and acceptable principles of mortification shall be afterward insisted on. Hatred of sin as sin, not only as galling or disquieting; a sense of the love of Christ in the cross; lie at the bottom of all true spiritual mortification. Now it is certain, that that which I speak of proceeds from self-love. Thou settest thyself with all diligence and earnestness to mortify such a lust or sin: what is the reason of it? It disquiets thee; it hath taken away thy peace; it fills thy heart with sorrow, and trouble, and fear; thou hast no rest because of it. Yea, but, friend, thou hast neglected prayer or reading; thou hast been vain and loose in thy conversation, in other things that have not been of the same nature with that lust wherewith thou art perplexed; these are no

less sins and evils than those under which thou groanest; Jesus Christ bled for them also: why dost thou not set thyself against them also? If thou hatest sin as sin, every evil way, thou wouldest be no less watchful against every thing that grieves and disquiets the Spirit of God, than against that which grieves and disquiets thine own soul. It is evident that thou contendest against sin merely because of thine own trouble by it. Would thy conscience be quiet under it, thou wouldest let it alone. Did it not disquiet thee, it should not be disquieted by thee. Now, canst thou think that God will go along with such hypocritical endeavours? that ever his Spirit will bear witness to the treachery and falsehood of thy spirit? Dost thou think he will ease thee of that which perplexeth thee, that thou mayest be at liberty to do that which no less grieves him? No, says God, here is one of whom, if he could be rid of this lust, I should never hear more; let him wrestle with this or he is lost. Let not any man think to do his own work, that will not do God's. God's work consists in universal obedience; to be freed of the present perplexity is their own only. Hence is that of the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Cleanse yourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." If we will do any thing, we must do all things. So then, it is not only an intense opposition to this or that peculiar lust, but a universal humble frame and temper of heart, with watchfulness over every evil and for the performance of every duty, that is accepted.

2. How knowest thou, but that God hath suffered the lust wherewith thou hast been perplexed

to get strength in thee, and power over thee, to chasten thee for thy other negligences, and common lukewarmness in walking before him; at least, to awaken thee to the consideration of thy ways, that thou mayest make a thorough work and change in thy course of walking with him? The rage and predominancy of a particular lust, is commonly the fruit and issue of a careless, negligent course in general; and that upon a double account:

(1.) As its natural effect, if I may so say. Lust, as I showed in general, lies in the heart of every one, even the best, whilst he lives: and think not that the Scripture speaks in vain, that it is subtle, cunning, crafty; that it seduces, entices, fights, rebels. Whilst a man keeps a diligent watch over his heart, its root and fountain; whilst, above all keepings, he keeps his heart, whence are the issues of life and death; lust withers and dies in it. But if, through negligence, it makes an eruption any particular way, gets a passage to the thoughts by the affections, and, from them and by them, perhaps, breaks out into open sin in the conversation; the strength of it bears that way it hath found out, and that way mainly it urgeth; until, having got a passage, it then vexes, and disquiets, and is not easily to be restrained. Thus, perhaps, a man may be put to wrestle all his days in sorrow with that which, by a strict, universal watch, might easily have been prevented.

(2.) As I said, God ofttimes suffers it to chasten our other negligences. For, as with wicked men, he gives them up to one sin as the judgment of another, Rom. i. 26, to a greater for the punishment of a less, or one that will hold them more

firmly and securely for that from which they might have possibly obtained a deliverance; so even with his own, he may, he doth, leave them sometimes to some vexatious distempers, either to prevent or cure some other evil. So was the messenger of Satan let loose on Paul, that he might not be lifted up through the abundance of spiritual revelations, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Was it not a correction to Peter's vain confidence, that he was left to deny his Master? Now if this be the state and condition of lust in its prevalency, that God oftentimes suffers it thus to prevail, at least to admonish us, and to humble us, perhaps to chasten and correct us, for our general loose and careless walking; is it possible that the effect should be removed, and the cause continued? that the particular lust should be mortified, and the general course be unreformed? He, then, that would really, thoroughly, and acceptably mortify any disquieting lust, let him take care to be equally diligent in all parts of obedience; and know, that every lust, every omission of duty, is burdensome to God, though but one is so to him; Isa. xliii. 24. Whilst there abides a treachery in the heart, to give indulgence to any negligence, in not pressing universally to all perfection in obedience; the soul is weak, as not giving faith its whole work, and selfish, as considering more the trouble of sin, than the filth and guilt of it; and lives under a constant provocation of God, so that it may not expect any comfortable issue in any spiritual duty that it doth undertake, much less in this under consideration, which requires another principle and frame of spirit for its accomplishment.

CHAP. IX.

Particular directions in relation to the foregoing case proposed. First, Consider the dangerous symptoms of any lust: 1. *Inveterateness.* 2. *Peace obtained under it; the several ways whereby that is done.* 3. *Frequency of success in its seductions.* 4. *The soul's fighting against it with arguments taken only from the event.* 5. *Its being attended with judiciary hardness.* 6. *Its withstanding particular dealings from God. The state of persons in whom these things are found.*

THIRD. The foregoing general rules being supposed, particular directions to the soul for its guidance under the sense of a disquieting lust or distemper, come next to be proposed; which is the main thing I aim at. Now of these some are previous and preparatory, and in some of them the work itself is contained.

I. Of the first sort are these ensuing.

Direction 1. Consider what dangerous symptoms thy lust hath attending or accompanying it; whether it hath any deadly mark on it or no. If it hath, extraordinary remedies are to be used; an ordinary course of mortification will not do it.

You will say, What are these dangerous marks and symptoms, the desperate attendances of an indwelling lust, that you intend? Some of them shall name.

(1.) Inveterateness. If it hath lain long corrupting in thy heart, if thou hast suffered it to abide in power and prevalency for some long season, without attempting vigorously the killing of it, and the healing of the wounds thou hast received by it, thy distemper is dangerous. Hast thou, for some

long season, permitted worldliness, ambition greediness of study, to eat up other duties, th duties wherein thou oughtest to hold constan communion with God? or uncleanness to defil thy heart, with vain, and foolish, and wicke imaginations, for many days? Thy lust hath dangerous symptom. So was the case with David "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of m foolishness," Psa. xxxviii. 5. When a lust hat lain long in the heart, corrupting, festering, can kering, it brings the soul to a woful condition In such a case an ordinary course of humiliatio will not do the work. For, whatever it be, it will by the means foregoing, insinuate itself more o less into all the faculties of the soul, and habituat the affections to its company and society; it grow familiar to the mind and conscience, that they d not startle at it as a strange thing, but are bol with it as that which they are wonted unto: yea it will get such advantage by this means, as often times to exert and put forth itself without havin any notice taken of it at all, as it seems to hav been with Joseph in his swearing by the life o Pharaoh. Unless some extraordinary course b taken, such a person hath no ground in the worl to expect that his latter end shall be peace.

For, first, how will he be able to distinguis between the long abode of an unmortified lus and the dominion of sin which cannot befall a re generate person? Secondly, how can he promis himself that it shall ever be otherwise with hin or that his lusts will cease tumultuating and se ducing, when he sees that it is fixed and abiding and hath been so for many days, and hath gon through variety of conditions with him? It ma

be it hath tried mercies and afflictions, and those possibly so remarkable that the soul could not avoid taking special notice of them: it may be it hath weathered out many a storm, and passed under much variety of gifts in the administration of the word. And will it prove an easy thing to dislodge an inmate pleading a title by prescription? Old neglected wounds are often mortal, always dangerous. Indwelling distemper grows restive and stubborn, by continuance in ease and quiet. Lust is such an inmate as, if it can plead time and some prescription, will not easily be ejected. As it never dies of itself, so, if it be not daily killed, it will always gather strength.

(2.) Secret pleas of the heart for countenancing itself, and keeping up its peace, notwithstanding the abiding of a lust, without a vigorous gospel attempt for its mortification; are another dangerous symptom of a deadly distemper in the heart. Now there are several ways whereby this may be done. I shall name some of them. As,

[1.] When upon thoughts, perplexing thoughts about sin, instead of applying himself to the destruction of it, a man searches his heart to see what evidences he can find of a good condition notwithstanding that sin and lust, so that it may go well with him.

For a man to gather up his experiences of God, to call them to mind, to collect them, to consider, try, improve them, is an excellent thing, a duty practised by all the saints, commended in the Old Testament and the New. This was David's work, when he "communed with his own heart," and called to remembrance the former loving-kindness of the Lord; Psa. lxxvii. 6—9. This is the

duty that Paul sets us to practise, 2 Cor. xiii. 5 And as it is in itself excellent, so it hath beauty added to it by a proper season. A time of trial or temptation, or disquietment of the heart abou sin, is a picture of silver to set off this golden ap ple, as Solomon speaks. But now, to do it for thi end, to satisfy conscience which cries and calls fo another purpose, is a desperate device of a hear in love with sin. When a man's conscience shal deal with him, when God shall rebuke him for th sinful distemper of his heart; if he, instead of apply ing himself to get that sin pardoned in the blood o Christ and mortified by his Spirit, shall relieve him self by any such other evidences as he hath or think himself to have, and so disentangle himself from un der the yoke that God was putting on his neck; hi condition is very dangerous, his wound hardly cur able. Thus the Jews, under the gallings of their ow consciences, and the convincing preaching of ou Saviour, supported themselves with this, that the were Abraham's children, and on that account ac cepted with God; and so countenanced themselve in all abominable wickedness to their utter ruin.

This is, in some degree, a "blessing of a man' self," and saying, upon one account or other, tha "he shall have peace although he adds drunken ness to thirst." Love of sin, undervaluation c peace and of all tastes of love from God, are en wrapped in such a frame. Such a one plainl shows, that if he can but keep up hope of escapin the wrath to come, he can be well content to b unfruitful in the world, at any distance from Go that is not final separation. What is to be ex pected from such a heart?

[2.] By applying grace and mercy to an un

mortified sin, or one not sincerely endeavoured to be mortified, is this deceit carried on. This is a sign of a heart greatly entangled with the love of sin. When, like Naaman, about his worshipping in the house of Rimmon, 2 Kings v. 18, a man hath secret thoughts in his heart, In all other things I will walk with God, but, in this thing, God be merciful unto me! his condition is sad. It is true, indeed, a resolution to this purpose, to indulge a man's self in any sin on the account of mercy, seems to be (and doubtless, if for any course, is) altogether inconsistent with Christian sincerity, is a badge of a hypocrite, and is the turning of the grace of God into wantonness, Jude 4: yet I doubt not but, through the craft of Satan and their own remaining unbelief, the children of God may themselves sometimes be insnared with this deceit of sin; or else Paul would never have so cautioned them against it as he doth, Rom. vi. 1, 2. Yea, indeed, there is nothing more natural, than for fleshly reasonings to grow high and strong on this account. The flesh would fain be indulged upon the account of grace: and every word that is spoken of mercy, it stands ready to catch at, and to pervert to its own corrupt aims and purposes. To apply mercy, then, to a sin not vigorously mortified, is to fulfil the end of the flesh upon the gospel.

These and many other ways and wiles, a deceitful heart will sometimes make use of, to countenance itself in its abominations. Now, when a man with his sin is in this condition, and there is a secret liking of the sin prevalent in his heart, so that, though his will be not wholly set upon it, yet he hath an imperfect willingness towards it,

would practise it were it not for such and such considerations, and hereupon relieves himself other ways than by the mortification and pardon of it in the blood of Christ; that man's wounds stink and are corrupt, and he will, without speedy deliverance, be at the door of death.

(3.) Frequency of success in sin's seduction in obtaining the prevailing consent of the will unto it, is another dangerous symptom. This is that I mean: when the sin spoken of gets the consent of the will with some delight, though it be not actually outwardly perpetrated, yet it hath success. A man may not be able, upon outward considerations, to go along with sin, to that which James, in chap. i. 14, 15, calls the finishing of it as to the outward acts, when yet the will to sin may be actually obtained: then hath it, I say, success. Now if any lust be able thus far to prevail in the soul of any man, as his condition may possibly be very bad, and himself be unregenerate, so it cannot possibly be very good, but dangerous. And it is all one as to the matter, whether this be done by the choice of the will or by inadvertency, for that inadvertency itself is in a manner chosen. When we are inadvertent and negligent where we are bound to watchfulness and carefulness, that inadvertency doth not take off from the voluntariness of what we do thereupon; for although men do not choose and resolve to be negligent and inadvertent, yet if they choose the things that will make them so, they choose inadvertency itself, as a thing may be chosen in its cause.

And let not men think that the evil of their hearts is in any measure extenuated, because they seem for the most part to be surprised into that

consent which they seem to give unto it; for it is negligence of their duty in watching over their hearts, that betrays them into that surprisal.

(4.) When a man fighteth against his sin only with arguments from the issue, or the punishment due unto it; it is a sign that sin hath taken great possession of the will, and that in the heart there is a superfluity of naughtiness. Such a man as opposes nothing to the seduction of sin and lust in his heart, but fear of shame among men or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do the sin, if there were no punishment attending it; which, what it differs from living in the practice of sin, I know not. Those who are Christ's, and are actuated in their obedience upon gospel principles, have the death of Christ, the love of God, the detestable nature of sin, the preciousness of communion with God, a deep-grounded abhorrency of sin as sin, to oppose to any seduction of sin, to all the workings, strivings, fightings of lust in their hearts. So did Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9; "How shall I do this great evil," saith he, "and sin against the Lord," my good and gracious God? And Paul, "The love of Christ constrains us," 2 Cor. v. 14; and, "Having received these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all pollutions of flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. But now, if a man be so under the power of his lust that he hath nothing but law to oppose it with; if he cannot fight against it with gospel weapons, but deals with it altogether with hell and judgment, which are the proper arms of the law; it is most evident, that sin hath possessed itself of his will and affections to a very great prevalency and conquest.

Such a person hath, as to the particular spoken

of, cast off the conduct of renewing grace, and i kept from ruin only by restraining grace; and s far is he fallen from grace, and returned unde the power of the law: and can it be thought tha this is not a great provocation to Christ, tha men should cast off his easy, gentle yoke and rule and cast themselves under the iron yoke of th law, merely out of indulgence unto their lusts?

Try thyself by this also. When thou art b sin driven to make a stand, so that thou mus either serve it, and rush at the command of it int folly, like the horse into the battle, or make hea against it to suppress it; what dost thou say t thy soul? What dost thou expostulate with thy self? Is this all? Hell will be the end of th course, vengeance will meet with me and find m out! It is time for thee to look about thee; ev lies at the door. Paul's main argument to evinc that sin shall not have dominion over believer is, that they are not under the law, but unde grace, Rom. vi. 14. If thy contendings again sin be all on legal accounts, from legal principl and motives, what assurance canst thou attain t that sin shall not have dominion over thee, whic will be thy ruin?

Yea, know, that this reserve will not long ho out; if thy lust hath driven thee from strong gospel forts, it will speedily prevail against th also. Do not suppose that such consideratio will deliver thee, when thou hast voluntarily give up to thine enemy those helps and means of pr servation which have a thousand times the strength. Rest assuredly in this, that unle thou recover thyself with speed from this co dition, the thing that thou fearest will come up

thee. What gospel principles do not, legal motives cannot do.

(5.) When it is probable that there is, or may be, somewhat of judiciary hardness, or at least chastening punishment, in thy lust as disquieting; this is another dangerous symptom. That God doth sometimes leave even those of his own, under the perplexing power of some lust or sin at least, to correct them for former sins, negligence, and folly, I no way doubt. Hence was that complaint of the church, "Why hast thou hardened us from the fear of thy name?" Isa. lxiii. 17. That this is his way of dealing with unregenerate men, no man questions. But how shall a man know whether there be any thing of God's chastening hand in his being left to the disquietment of his distemper?

Ans. Examine thy heart and ways. What was the state and condition of thy soul before thou fellest into the entanglements of that sin of which now thou so complainest? Hadst thou been negligent in duties? Hadst thou lived inordinately to thyself? Is there the guilt of any great sin lying upon thee unrepented of? A new sin may be permitted, as well as a new affliction sent, to bring an old sin to remembrance.

Hast thou received any eminent mercy, protection, deliverance, which thou didst not improve in a due manner, nor were thankful for? Or hast thou been exercised with any affliction, without labouring for the appointed end of it? Or hast thou been wanting to the opportunities of glorifying God in thy generation, which in his good providence he had graciously afforded unto thee? Or hast thou conformed thyself unto the world

and the men of it, through the abounding o temptations in the days wherein thou livest?

If thou findest this to have been thy state awake, call upon God; thou art fast asleep in a storm of anger round about thee.

(6.) When thy lust hath already withstood par ticular dealings from God against it. This con dition is described, Isa. lvii. 17; "For the ini quity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smot him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went o frowardly in the way of his heart." God hat dealt with them about their prevailing lust, an that several ways, by affliction and desertion but they held out against all. This is a sad con dition, in which nothing can relieve a man bu mere sovereign grace, as God expresses it in th next verse; which no man ought to promise him self, or bear himself upon. God oftentimes, i his providential dispensations, meets with a man and speaks particularly to the evil of his heart, a he did to Joseph's brethren concerning their sel ing him into Egypt. This makes the man reflec on his sin, and judge himself in particular for i God makes it to be the voice of the danger affliction, trouble, sickness, that he is in or unde Sometimes, in reading of the word, God makes man stay on something that cuts him to the hear and shakes him as to his present condition. Mo frequently doth he meet with men, in the hearin of the word preached, his great ordinance for co viction, conversion, and edification. God ofte hews men by the sword of his word in that ord nance; strikes directly on their bosom-belove lust; startles the sinner; makes him engage the mortification and relinquishment of the evil

his heart. Now if his lust have taken such hold on him as to enforce him to break these bonds of the Lord, and to cast these cords from him; if it overcomes these convictions, and gets again into its old posture; if it can cure the wounds it so receives; that soul is in a sad condition. Unspeakable are the evils which attend such a frame of heart: every particular warning to a man in such a state, is an inestimable mercy: how then doth he despise God in them who holds out against them! and what infinite patience is this in God, that he doth not cast off such a one, and swear in his wrath that he shall never enter into his rest!

These and many other evidences are there, of a lust that is dangerous, if not mortal. As our Saviour said of the evil spirit, "This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer," so say I of lusts of this kind; an ordinary course of mortification will not do it; extraordinary ways must be fixed on.

This is the first particular direction, Consider whether the lust or sin you are contending with, hath any of these dangerous symptoms attending upon it.

Before I proceed, I must give one caution by the way, lest any be deceived by what hath been spoken. Whereas, I say, the things and evils above-mentioned may befall true believers, let not any that finds the same things in himself, thence conclude that he is a true believer. These are the evils that believers may fall into and be insnared with, not the things that constitute a believer. A man may as well conclude that he is a believer because he is an adulterer, seeing David, that was so, fell into adultery, as conclude it

from the signs foregoing, which are the evils o sin and Satan in the hearts of believers. The seventh of the Romans contains the description o a regenerate man. He that shall consider what is spoken of his dark side, of his unregenerate part of the indwelling power and violence of sin remaining in him; and, because he finds the like in himself, conclude that he is a regenerate man will be deceived in his reckoning. It is all one as if you should argue, A wise man may be sick and wounded, yea, do some things foolishly; therefore every one who is sick and wounded, and does things foolishly, is a wise man. Or, as if a silly deformed creature, hearing one say of a beautiful person, that he had a mark or a scar that much disfigured him, should conclude, that because he hath himself scars, and moles, and warts, that he also is beautiful. If you will have evidences o your being believers, it must be from those things that constitute men believers. He that hath these things in himself, may safely conclude, If I am a believer, I am a most miserable one. But tha any man is so, he must look for other evidences if he will have peace.

CHAP. X.

The second particular direction. Get a clear sense of, 1. *The guilt of the sin perplexing. Considerations for help therein proposed.* 2. *Of the danger; manifold.* (1.) *Of hardening.* (2.) *Of temporal correction.* (3.) *Of loss of peace and strength.* (4.) *Of eternal destruction. Rules for the management of this consideration.* 3. *The evil of it,* (1.) *In grieving the Spirit.* (2.) *In wounding the new creature.*

2. THE second direction is this:

Get a clear and abiding sense upon thy mind and conscience, first, of the guilt, secondly, of the danger, thirdly, of the evil, of that sin wherewith thou art perplexed.

(1.) Of the guilt of it. It is one of the deceits of a prevailing lust, to extenuate its own guilt. Is it not a little one? When I go and bow myself in the house of Rimmon, God be merciful to me in this thing. Though this be bad, yet it is not so bad as such and such an evil: others of the people of God have had such a frame: yea, what dreadful actual sins have some of them fallen into! Innumerable ways there are whereby sin diverts the mind from a right and due apprehension of its guilt. Its noisome exhalations darken the mind, so that it cannot make a right judgment of things: perplexing reasonings, extenuating promises, tumultuating desires, treacherous purposes of relinquishment, hopes of mercy, all have a share in disturbing the mind in its consideration of the guilt of a prevailing lust. The prophet tells us, that lust will do this wholly, when it comes to the

height, Hos. iv. 11, "Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart;" the heart meaning the understanding, as it is often used in the Scripture. And as they accomplish this work to the height in unregenerate persons, so in part in regenerate also. Solomon tells you of him who was enticed by the lewd woman, that he was among the simple ones, he was a "young man void of understanding," Prov. vii. 7. And wherein did his folly appear? Why, says he, in the 23rd verse, "he knew not that it was for his life;" he considered not the guilt of the evil that he was involved in. And the Lord, rendering a reason why his dealings with Ephraim took no better effect, gives this account, Hos. vii. 11; "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart;" he had no understanding of his own miserable condition. Would it have been possible that David should have lain so long in the guilt of that abominable sin, but that he had innumerable corrupt reasonings, hindering him from taking a clear view of its ugliness and guilt, in the glass of the law? This made the prophet that was sent for his awakening, shut up all subterfuges and pretences, in his dealings with him, by his parable; that so he might fall fully under a sense of the guilt of it. This is the proper issue of lust in the heart; it darkens the mind so that it shall not judge aright of its guilt; and many other ways it hath for its own extenuation, that I shall not now insist on. Let this then be the first care of him that would mortify sin, to fix a right judgment of its guilt in his mind. To which end take these considerations to thy assistance.

[1.] Though the power of sin be weakened by inherent grace in them that have it, so that sin

shall not have dominion over them as it hath over others, yet the guilt of sin that yet abides and remains, is aggravated and heightened by it. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 1, 2. How shall "we that are dead;" the emphasis is on the word *we*. How shall we do it, who, as he afterwards describes it, have received grace from Christ to the contrary? We, doubtless, are more evil than any, if we do it. I shall not insist on the special aggravations of the sins of such persons; how they sin against more love, mercy, grace, assistance, relief, means, and deliverances, than others. But let this consideration abide in thy mind. There is inconceivably more evil and guilt in the evil of thy heart that doth remain, than there would be in so much sin if thou hadst no grace at all. Observe,

[2.] That as God sees abundance of beauty and excellency in the desires of the hearts of his servants, more than in any the most glorious works of other men, yea, more than in most of their own outward performances, which have a greater mixture of sin than the desires and pantings of grace in the heart have; so God sees a great deal of evil in the working of lust in their hearts, yea, and more than in the open notorious acts of wicked men, or in many outward sins whereinto the saints may fall; seeing there is more opposition made against them, and more humiliation generally follows them. Thus Christ, dealing with his decaying children, Rev. iii. 15, goes to the root with them; lays aside their

profession; "I know thee," thou art quite an other thing than thou professest, and this make thee abominable.

So then, let these things, and the like consi derations, lead thee to a clear sense of the guil of thy indwelling lust, that there may be n room in thy heart for extenuating or excusin thoughts, whereby sin insensibly will get strengt and prevail.

(2.) Consider the danger of it, which is mani fold:

[1.] Of being hardened by its deceitfulness This the apostle sorely charges on the Hebrews chap. iii. 12, 13; "Take heed, brethren, les there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelie in departing from the living God; but exhort on another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any you be hardened through the deceitfulness sin." Take heed, saith he; use all means, con sider your temptations, watch diligently; there a treachery, a deceit in sin, that tends to th hardening of your hearts from the fear of Goo The hardening here mentioned is to the utmos utter obduration: sin tends to it, and every di temper and lust will make at least some progre towards it. Thou that wast tender, and did use to melt under the word and under affliction wilt grow, as some have profanely spoken, se mon-proof and sickness-proof. Thou that did tremble at the presence of God, at thoughts death, and appearance before him, when tho hadst more assurance of his love than now tho hast, shalt have a stoutness upon thy spirit not be moved by these things. Thy soul and thy s shall be spoken of and spoken to, and thou sha

not be at all concerned; but shalt be able to pass over duties, praying, hearing, reading, and thy heart not in the least affected. Sin will grow a light thing to thee; thou wilt pass by it as a thing of nought: this it will grow to, and what will be the end of such a condition? Can a sadder thing befall thee? Is it not enough to make any heart to tremble, to think of being brought into that state wherein slight thoughts of sin, slight thoughts of grace, of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the law, heaven, and hell, should come all in at the same season? Take heed; this is that thy lusting is working towards; even to the hardening of the heart, searing of the conscience, blinding of the mind, stupifying of the affections, and deceiving of the whole soul.

[2.] The danger of some great temporal correction, which the Scripture calls vengeance, judgment, and punishment, Psa. lxxxix. 30—33. Though God shall not utterly cast thee off for this abomination that lies in thy heart, yet he will visit with the rod: though he pardon and forgive, he will take vengeance of thy inventions. O remember David and all his troubles! Look on him flying into the wilderness, and consider the hand of God upon him. Is it nothing to thee, that God should kill thy child in anger, ruin thy estate in anger, break thy bones in anger, in anger suffer thee to be a scandal and reproach, in anger kill thee, destroy thee, make thee lie down in darkness? Is it nothing that he should punish, ruin, and undo others for thy sake? Let me not be mistaken; I do not mean that God doth send all these things always on his people in anger; God forbid. But this I say, that when he doth

so deal with thee, and thy conscience bears witness with him what thy provocations have been, thou wilt find his dealings full of bitterness to thy soul. If thou fearest not these things, I fear thou art under hardness.

[3.] The danger of loss of peace and strength, all a man's days. To have peace with God, to have strength to walk before God, is the sum of the great promises of the covenant of grace. In these things is the life of our souls. Without them in some comfortable measure, to live is to die. What good will our lives do us, if we see not the face of God sometimes in peace? if we have not some strength to walk with him? Now, of both these will an unmortified lust certainly deprive the souls of men. This case is so evident in David, as that nothing can be more clear. How often doth he complain that his bones were broken, his soul disquieted, his wounds grievous on this account! Take other instances; "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and hid myself," Isa. lvii. 18. What peace, I pray, is there to a soul while God hides himself? or strength whilst he smites? "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face," Hos. v. 15. I will leave them, hide my face, and what will become of their peace and strength? If ever, then, thou hast enjoyed peace with God; if ever his terrors have made thee afraid; if ever thou hast had strength to walk with him, or ever hast mourned in thy prayer, and been troubled because of thy weakness; think of this danger that hangs over thy head. It is perhaps but a little while, and thou shalt see the face of God in peace no more

perhaps by to-morrow thou shalt not be able to pray, read, hear, or perform any duties with the least cheerfulness, life, or vigour: and possibly thou mayest never see a quiet hour whilst thou livest; thou mayest carry about thee broken bones full of pain and terror all the days of thy life. Yea, perhaps God will shoot his arrows at thee, and fill thee with anguish and disquietness, with fears and perplexities; make thee a terror and an astonishment to thyself and others; show thee hell and wrath every moment; frighten and scare thee with sad apprehensions of his hatred; so that thy sore shall run in the night season, and thy soul shall refuse comfort; so that thou shalt wish death rather than life, yea, thy soul may choose strangling. Consider this a little, that though God should not utterly destroy thee, yet he might cast thee into this condition, wherein thou shalt have quick and living apprehensions of thy destruction. Accustom thy heart to thoughts thereof; let it know what is like to be the issue of its state; leave not this consideration until thou hast made thy soul to tremble within thee.

[4.] There is the danger of eternal destruction. For the due management of this consideration, observe, first of all, that there is such a connexion between a continuance in sin and eternal destruction, that though God does resolve to deliver some from a continuance in sin that they may not be destroyed, yet he will deliver none from destruction that continue in sin. So that, whilst any one lies under an abiding power of sin, the threats of destruction and everlasting separation from God are to be held out to him. So Heb. iii. 12, to which add Heb. x. 38. This is the rule of God's

proceeding: if any man depart from him, draw back through unbelief, God's soul hath no pleasure in him; that is, his indignation shall pursue him to destruction. So evidently, Gal. vi. 8.

But again, he who is so entangled, as above described, under the power of any corruption, can have, at that present, no clear, prevailing evidence of his interest in the covenant by the efficacy whereof he may be delivered from fear of destruction. So that, destruction from the Lord may justly be a terror to him, and he may, he ought to look upon it as that which will be the end of his course and ways. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1. True! but who shall have the comfort of this assertion? who may assume it to himself? "They that walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh." But you will say, Is not this to persuade men to unbelief? I answer, no: there is a twofold judgment that a man may make of himself, first, of his person, and second, of his ways: it is the judgment of his ways, not his person, that I speak of. Let a man get the best evidence for his person that he can; yet to judge that an evil way will end in destruction, is his duty; not to do it, is atheism. I do not say, that in such a condition a man ought to throw away the evidences of his personal interest in Christ; but I say, he cannot keep them. There is a twofold condemnation of a man's self. First, in respect of desert, when the soul concludes, that it deserves to be cast out of the presence of God; and this is so far from the business of unbelief, that it is an effect of faith. Secondly, with respect to the issue and event, when the soul concludes it shall be damned. I do

not say this is the duty of any one, nor do I call them to it. But this I say, that the end of an evil way wherein a man is, ought by him to be concluded to be death, that he may be provoked to fly from it. And this is another consideration that ought to dwell upon such a soul, if it desire to be freed from the entanglement of its lusts.

(3.) Consider the evils of it. I mean its present evils: danger respects what is to come, evil what is present. Some of the many evils that attend an unmortified lust, may be mentioned.

[1.] It grieves the holy and blessed Spirit, which is given to believers to dwell in them and abide with them. So the apostle, Eph. iv. 25—29, dissuading them from many lusts and sins, gives this as the great motive of it, ver. 30; "Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption." Grieve not that Spirit of God, saith he, whereby you receive so many and so great benefits; of which he instances one signal and comprehensive one, sealing to the day of redemption. He is grieved by it, as a tender and loving friend is grieved at the unkindness of his friend, of whom he hath well deserved: so is it with this tender and loving Spirit, who hath chosen our hearts for a habitation to dwell in, and there to do for us all that our souls desire. He is grieved by our harbouring in our hearts with him, his enemies, and those whom he is to destroy. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve us, Lam. iii. 33; and shall we daily grieve him? Thus is he said sometimes to be "vexed," sometimes "grieved at his heart," to express the greatest sense of our provocation. Now if there be any thing of gracious ingenuousness left in the soul,

if it be not utterly hardened by the deceitfulnes of sin, this consideration will certainly affect it Consider who and what thou art, who the Spiri is that is grieved, what he hath done for thee what he comes to thy soul about, what he hat already done in thee, and be ashamed. Amon those who walk with God, there is no greater mo tive and incentive unto universal holiness, to th preserving of their hearts and spirits in all purit and cleanness, than this, that the blessed Spirit who hath undertaken to dwell in them as temple of God, and to preserve them meet for him wh so dwells in them, is continually considering wha they give entertainment in their hearts unto, an rejoiceth when his temple is kept undefiled. Tha was a high aggravation of the sin of Zimri, tha he brought his adulteress into the congregation i the sight of Moses and the rest, who were weep ing for the sins of the people, Numb. xxv. 6. An is it not a high aggravation of the countenancing lust, or suffering it to abide in the heart, when is, as it must be, if we are believers, entertaine under the peculiar eye and view of the Hol Ghost, taking care to preserve his tabernacle pu and holy?

[2.] The Lord Jesus is wounded afresh by i His new creature in the heart is wounded. H love is foiled, his adversary gratified. As a tot relinquishment of him by the deceitfulness of s is the crucifying him afresh, and the putting hi to open shame; so, every harbouring of sin th he came to destroy, wounds and grieves him.

[3.] It will take away a man's usefulness in h generation. His works, his endeavours, his l bours, seldom receive blessing from God. If

be a preacher, God commonly blows upon his ministry, so that he shall labour in the fire, and not be honoured with any success, or with doing any work for God: and the like may be spoken of other conditions. The world is at this day full of poor, withering professors: how few are there that walk in any beauty or glory! How barren, how useless are they, for the most part! Amongst the many reasons that may be assigned of this sad estate, it may justly be feared this is none of the least effectual, that many men harbour spirit-devouring lusts in their bosoms, which lie as worms at the root of their obedience, and corrode and weaken it day by day. All graces, all the ways and means whereby any graces may be exercised and improved, are prejudiced by this means; and as to any success, God blasts such men's undertakings.

This, then, is my second direction, and it regards the opposition which is to be made to lust in respect of its habitual residence in the soul. Keep alive upon thy heart these or the like considerations, of its guilt, danger, and evil: be much in the meditation of these things: cause thy heart to dwell and abide upon them. Engage thy thoughts to these considerations: let them not go off, nor wander from them, until they begin to have a powerful influence upon thy soul, until they make it to tremble.

CHAP. XI.

The third direction proposed. Load the conscience with th guilt of the perplexing distemper. The ways and mean whereby that may be done. The fourth direction. Vehe ment desire for deliverance. The fifth direction. Som distempers rooted deeply in men's natural tempers. Con siderations of such distempers: ways of dealing with them The sixth direction. Occasions and advantages of sin t be prevented. The seventh direction. The first acting of sin vigorously to be opposed.

3. THIS is my third direction:

Load thy conscience with the guilt of it. No only consider that it hath a guilt, but load th conscience with the guilt of its actual eruption and disturbances.

For the right improvement of this rule, I sha give some particular directions.

(1.) Take God's method in it, and begin wit generals, and so descend to particulars.

[1.] Charge thy conscience with that gui which appears in it, from the rectitude and hol ness of the law. Bring the holy law of God int thy conscience; lay thy corruption to it; pra that thou mayest be affected with it. Conside the holiness, spirituality, fiery severity, inward ness, absoluteness, of the law; and see how tho canst stand before it. Be much, I say, in affect ing thy conscience with the terror of the Lord i the law, and how righteous it is that every one o thy transgressions should receive a recompenc of reward. Perhaps thy conscience will inver shifts and evasions to keep off the power of th

consideration; as, that the condemning power of the law doth not belong to thee, that thou art set free from it, and the like; and that so, though thou be not conformable to it, yet thou needest not to be so much troubled at it.

But, tell thy conscience, that it cannot manage any evidence to the purpose that thou art not free from the condemning power of sin, whilst thy unmortified lust lies in thy heart; so that, perhaps, the law may make good its plea against thee for a full dominion, and then thou art a lost creature. Wherefore it is best to ponder to the utmost what it hath to say.

Assuredly, he that pleads in the most secret reserve of his heart, that he is freed from the condemning power of the law, thereby secretly to countenance himself in giving the least allowance unto any sin or lust, is not able, on gospel grounds, to manage any evidence unto any tolerable, spiritual security, that indeed he is, in a due manner, freed from what he so pretends himself to be delivered from.

Farther, whatever be the issue, yet the law hath commission from God to seize upon transgressors wherever it finds them, and so bring them before his throne, where they are to plead for themselves. This is thy present case; the law hath found thee out, and before God it will bring thee. If thou canst plead a pardon, well and good; if not, the law will do its work.

However, this is the proper work of the law, to discover sin in the guilt of it, to awake and humble the soul for it, to be a glass to represent sin in its colours; and if thou deniest to deal with it on this account, it is not through faith, but

through the hardness of thy heart, and the deceitfulness of sin.

This is a door that too many professors have gone out at to open apostacy. Such a deliverance from the law they have pretended, as that they would consult its guidance and direction no more, they would measure their sin by it no more. By little and little this principle hath insensibly proceeded from the notion of it to influence their practical understandings; and having taken possession there, hath turned the will and affections loose to all manner of abominations.

By such ways as these, then, I say, persuade thy conscience to hearken diligently to what the law speaks in the name of the Lord unto thee about thy lust and corruption. Oh! if thy ears be open, it will speak with a voice that shall make thee tremble, that shall cast thee to the ground and fill thee with astonishment. If ever thou wil mortify thy corruptions, thou must tie up thy conscience to the law, shut it from all shifts and exceptions, until it owns its guilt with a clea and thorough apprehension; so that thence, a David speaks, thy "iniquity may be ever befor thee."

[2.] Bring thy lust to the gospel, not for relief, but for farther conviction of its guilt: lool on him whom thou hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul, What have I done What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on! Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the So for his blood, to the Holy Ghost for his grace Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled th heart that Christ died to wash, which the blesse

Spirit hath chosen to dwell in? And can I keep myself out of the dust? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? How shall I hold up my head with any boldness before him? Do I account communion with him of so little value, that for this vile lust's sake I have scarce left him any room in my heart? How shall I escape, if I neglect so great salvation? In the mean time, what shall I say to the Lord? Love, mercy, grace, goodness, peace, joy, consolation; I have despised them all, and esteemed them as a thing of nought, that I might harbour a lust in my heart.

Have I obtained a view of God's fatherly countenance, that I might behold his face, and provoke him to his face? Was my soul washed, that room might be made for new defilements? Shall I endeavour to disappoint the end of the death of Christ? Shall I daily grieve that Spirit whereby I am sealed to the day of redemption? Entertain thy conscience daily with this treaty. See if it can stand before this aggravation of its guilt. If this make it not sink in some measure, and melt, I fear thy case is dangerous.

(2.) Descend to particulars. As, under the general head of the gospel, all the benefits of it are to be considered, such as redemption, justification, and the like; so in particular, consider the management of the love that is in them toward thine own soul, for the aggravation of the guilt of thy corruption. As,

[1.] Consider the infinite patience and forbearance of God towards thee in particular. Consider what advantages he might have taken against thee, to have made thee a shame and a reproach in this world, and an object of wrath for ever;

how thou hast dealt treacherously and falsely with him from time to time, flattered him with thy lips, but broken all promises and engagements, and that by the means of that sin thou art now in pursuit of; and yet he hath spared thee from time to time, although thou seemest boldly to have put it to the trial how long he could hold out. And wilt thou yet sin against him? Wilt thou yet weary him, and make him to serve with thy corruptions?

Hast thou not often been ready thyself to conclude, that it was utterly impossible that he should bear any longer with thee; that he would cast thee off, and be gracious no more; that all his forbearance was exhausted, and hell and wrath was even ready prepared for thee? And yet, above all thy expectation, he hath returned with visitations of love: and wilt thou yet abide in the provocation of the eyes of his glory?

[2.] How often hast thou been at the door of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and by the infinite, rich grace of God hast been recovered to communion with him again!

Hast thou not found grace decaying; delight in duties, ordinances, prayer, and meditation, vanishing; inclinations to loose, careless walking thriving; and such as before were entangled, almost beyond recovery? Hast thou not found thyself engaged, and that with delight, in such ways, societies, companies, as God abhors? And wilt thou venture any more to the brink of hardness?

[3.] All God's gracious dealings with thee, in providential dispensations, deliverances, afflictions, mercies, enjoyments; all ought here to have

place. By these, I say, and the like means, load thy conscience, and leave it not until it be thoroughly affected with the guilt of thy indwelling corruption; until it is sensible of its wound, and lie in the dust before the Lord. Unless this be done to the purpose, all other endeavours are to no purpose. Whilst the conscience hath any means to alleviate the guilt of sin, the soul will never vigorously attempt its mortification.

Direction 4. Being thus affected with thy sin, in the next place, get a constant longing and breathing after deliverance from the power of it. Suffer not thy heart one moment to be contented with thy present frame and condition. Longing desires after any thing, in things natural and civil, are of no value nor consideration, any farther than as they incite and stir up the person in whom they are, to the diligent use of means for the bringing about the thing aimed at. In spiritual things it is otherwise. Longing, breathing, and panting after deliverance, is a grace in itself, that hath a mighty power to conform the soul into the likeness of the thing longed after. Hence the apostle, describing the repentance and godly sorrow of the Corinthians, reckons this, vehement desire, as one eminent grace that was then set on work, 2 Cor. vii. 11. And in this case of indwelling sin, and the power of it, what frame doth he express himself to be in, Rom. vii. 24? His heart breaks out with longings into a most passionate expression of desire of deliverance. Now if this be the frame of saints upon the general consideration of indwelling sin, how is it to be heightened and increased when thereunto is added the

perplexing rage and power of any particular lust and corruption! Assure thyself, unless thou longest for deliverance, thou shalt not have it.

This will make the heart watchful for all opportunities of advantage against its enemy, and ready to close with any assistances that are afforded for its destruction. Strong desires are the very life of that "praying always" which is enjoined us in all conditions, and which in none is more necessary than in this: they set faith and hope on work, and are the soul's moving after the Lord. Get thy heart into a panting and breathing frame; long, sigh, cry out. You know the example of David; I shall not need to insist on it.

5. The fifth direction is, Consider whether the distemper with which thou art perplexed, be not rooted in thy nature, and cherished, fomented, and heightened from thy constitution. A proneness to some sins may doubtless lie in the natural temper and disposition of men. In this case, consider,

(1.) This is not in the least an extenuation of the guilt of thy sin. Some, with an open profaneness, will ascribe gross enormities to their temper and disposition. And whether others may not relieve themselves from the pressing guilt of their distempers by the same consideration, I know not. It is from the fall, from the original depravation of our natures, that the fuel and nourishment of any sin abides in our natural temper. David reckons his being "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," Psa. li. 5, as an aggravation of his following sin, not a lessening or extenuation of it. That thou art peculiarly inclined unto any sinfu

distemper, is but a peculiar breaking out of original lust in thy nature, which should peculiarly abase and humble thee.

(2.) That which thou hast to fix upon on this account, in reference to thy walking with God, is, that so great an advantage is given to sin, as also to Satan, by this thy temper and disposition, that, without extraordinary watchfulness, care, and diligence, they will assuredly prevail against thy soul. Thousands have been on this account hurried headlong to hell, who otherwise might at least have gone at a more gentle, less provoking, less mischievous rate.

(3.) For the mortification of any distemper, so rooted in the nature of a man, in addition to all other ways and means already named or farther to be insisted on, there is one expedient peculiarly suited. This is that of the apostle, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27. The bringing of the very body into subjection, is an ordinance of God, tending to the mortification of sin. This gives check to the natural root of the distemper, and withers it by taking away its fatness of soil. Perhaps, because the papists (men ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, the work of his Spirit, and whole business in hand, knowing indeed the true nature neither of sin nor mortification) have laid the whole weight and stress of mortification in voluntary services and penances leading to the subjection of the body; it may, on the other side, be a temptation to some to neglect some means of humiliation which by God himself are owned and appointed. The bringing of the body into subjection in the case insisted on, by cutting

short the natural appetite by means of fasting watching, and the like, is doubtless acceptabl to God, if it be done with the ensuing limitations

[1.] That the outward weakening and impair ing of the body be not looked upon as a thing good in itself, or that any mortification doth consist, therein (which were again to bring us unde carnal ordinances); but only as a means for the end proposed, the weakening of any distempe in its natural root and seat. A man may have leanness of body and soul together.

[2.] That the means whereby this is done namely, by fasting and watching, and the like, b not looked on as things that in themselves, and b virtue of their own power, can produce true mor tification of any sin; for if they would, sin migh be mortified without any help of the Spirit, i any unregenerate person in the world. They ar to be looked on only as ways whereby the Spiri may, and sometimes doth, put forth strength fo the accomplishing of his own work, especially i the case mentioned. Want of a right understand ing and due improvement of these and the lik considerations, hath raised a mortification amon the papists, that may be better applied to horse and other beasts of the field, than to believers.

This is the sum of what hath been spoken when the distemper complained of seems to b rooted in natural temper and constitution, in ap plying our souls to a participation of the bloo and Spirit of Christ, an endeavour is to be used, t give check in the way of God to the natural roo of that distemper.

Direction 6. Consider what occasions, wh advantages, thy distemper hath taken to exert an

put forth itself, and watch against them all. This is one part of that duty which our blessed Saviour recommends to his disciples under the name of watching, "I say unto you all, watch," Mark xiii. 37; which, in Luke xxi. 34, is, "Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged:" watch against all eruptions of thy corruptions. I mean that duty which David professed himself to be exercised unto: "I have," saith he, "kept myself from mine iniquity." He watched all the ways and workings of his iniquity in order to get before them, to rise up against them. This is that which we are called to under the name of "considering our ways." Consider what ways, what companies, what opportunities, what studies, what businesses, what conditions, have at any time given, or do usually give, advantages to thy distempers; and set thyself heedfully against them all. Men will do this with respect to their bodily infirmities and distempers: the seasons, the diet, the air, that have proved offensive, shall be avoided. Are the things of the soul of less importance? Know, that he who dares to dally with occasions of sin, will dare to sin. He that will venture upon temptations to wickedness, will venture upon wickedness. Hazael thought he should not be so wicked as the prophet told him he would be: to convince him, the prophet tells him no more but, Thou shalt be king of Syria. If he will venture on temptations unto cruelty, he will be cruel. Tell a man he shall commit such and such sins, he will startle at it: if you can convince him, that he will venture on such occasions and temptations to them, he will have little ground left for his confidence. Particular

directions belonging to this head, are many, not now to be insisted on. But because this head is of no less importance than the whole doctrine here handled, I have, in another treatise, about entering into temptations, treated of it at large.

Direction 7. Rise mightily against the first actings of thy distemper, its first conceptions. Suffer it not to get the least ground: do not say, Thus far it shall go, and no farther. If it have allowance for one step, it will take another. It is impossible to fix bounds to sin. It is like water in a channel; if it once break out, it will have its course. Its not acting, is easier to be compassed than its bounding. Therefore doth James give that gradation and process of lust, chap. i. 14, 15, that we may stop at the entrance. Dost thou find thy corruption to begin to entangle thy thoughts? Rise up with all thy strength against it, with no less indignation than if it had fully accomplished what it aims at. Consider what an unclean thought would have; it would have thee roll thyself in folly and filth. Ask envy what it would have; murder and destruction are at the end of it. Set thyself against it with no less vigour, than if it had utterly debased thee to wickedness. Without this course thou wilt not prevail. As sin gets ground in the affections to delight in it, it gets also upon the understanding to slight it.

CHAP. XII.

The eighth direction. Thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God. Our unacquaintedness with him, proposed and considered.

DIRECTION 8. Use and exercise thyself to such meditations, as may serve to fill thee at all times with self-abasement, and thoughts of thine own vileness. As,

(1.) Be much in thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God, and thine infinite, inconceivable distance from him. Many thoughts of it cannot but fill thee with a sense of thine own vileness, which strikes deep at the root of any indwelling sin. When Job comes to a clear discovery of the greatness and excellency of God, he is filled with self-abhorrency, and is pressed to humiliation; chap. xlii. 5, 6. And into what state doth the prophet Habakkuk affirm himself to be cast, upon the apprehension of the majesty of God? See chap. iii. 16. "With God," says Job, "is terrible majesty," chap. xxxvii. 22. Hence were the thoughts of them of old, that when they had seen God they should die. The Scripture abounds in this self-abasing consideration, comparing the men of the earth to "grasshoppers," to "vanity," to "the dust of the balance," in respect of God, Isa. xl. 13—15. Be much in thoughts of this nature, to abase the pride of thy heart, and to keep thy soul humble within thee. There is nothing will create in thee a greater indisposition to be imposed on by the deceits of sin, than such a

frame of heart. Think greatly of the greatness of God.

(2.) Think much of thine unacquaintedness with him: though thou knowest enough to keep thee low and humble, yet how little a portion is it that thou knowest of him! The contemplation hereof cast that wise man into those apprehensions of himself which he expresses, Prov. xxx. 2—4; "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Labour with this also to take down the pride of thy heart. What dost thou know of God? How little a portion is it! How immense is he in his nature! Canst thou look without terror into the abyss of eternity? Thou canst not bear the rays of his glorious being.

Because I look on this consideration as of great use in our walking with God, so far as it has (which it may have) a consistency with that filial boldness to draw nigh to the throne of grace which is given us in Jesus Christ, I shall farther insist upon it, in order to give an abiding impression of it to the souls of them who desire to walk humbly with God.

Consider then, I say, in order to keep thy heart in continual awe of the majesty of God, that persons of the most high and eminent attainments, of the nearest and most familiar communion with God, do yet in this life know but a very little of

him and his glory. God reveals his Name to Moses, even the most glorious attributes that he hath manifested in the covenant of grace, yet all are but the back parts of God, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6. All that he knows by it, is but little, low, compared to the perfection of his glory.

Hence, it is with peculiar reference to Moses that it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time," John i. 18. Of him in comparison with Christ, doth he speak, ver. 17, and of him it is here said, "no man," no, not Moses, the most eminent among them, "hath seen God at any time." We speak much of God; can talk of him, his ways, his works, his counsels, all the day long: the truth is, we know very little of him; our thoughts, our meditations, our expressions of him, are low, many of them unworthy of his glory, none of them reaching his perfections.

You will say, that Moses was under the law, when God wrapped up himself in darkness, and his mind in types, and clouds, and dark institutions. Under the glorious shining of the gospel, which hath brought life and immortality to light, God being revealed from his own bosom, we now know him much more clearly, and as he is; we see his face now, and not his back parts only, as Moses did.

Ans. 1. I acknowledge a vast and almost inconceivable difference between the acquaintance we now have with God, after his speaking to us by his own Son, and that which the generality of the saints had under the law, Heb. i. 2: for although their eyes were as good, sharp, and clear as ours, their faith and spiritual understanding not behind ours, the object as glorious unto them as

unto us, yet our day is more clear than theirs was: the clouds are blown away and scattered, the shadows of the night are gone and fled away, the sun is risen, and the means of sight are made more eminent and clear than formerly, Cant. iv. 6.

Ans. 2. Yet, that peculiar sight which Moses had of God, Exod. xxxiv., was a gospel sight, a sight of God as gracious, etc., while still it is called but his back parts, that is, but low and mean in comparison of his excellences and perfections.

Ans. 3. The apostle, exalting to the utmost this glory of gospel light above that of the law, and manifesting that now the veil causing darkness is taken away, so that "with open," or uncovered "face we behold the glory of the Lord," tells us how we behold it, "as in a glass," 2 Cor. iii. 18. How is that? clearly, perfectly? Alas! no: he tells you how that is, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; "we see through a glass darkly," saith he. It is not a telescope, that helps us to see things afar off, concerning which the apostle speaks. And yet what poor helps are they! how short do we come of the truth of things, notwithstanding their assistance! It is a looking-glass whereunto he alludes, where are only obscure species and images of things, and not the things themselves; and it is a sight therein, that he compares our knowledge to: he tells you also, that all that we do see, by or through this glass, is "in an enigma," in a riddle, in darkness and obscurity: and, speaking of himself, who surely was much more clear-sighted than any now living, he tells us that he saw "but in part," he saw but the back parts of heavenly things, ver. 12. And he compares all the knowledge he had attained of God to that he had of things when he

was a child, ver. 11; it is a part, short of that which is perfect; yea, such as shall be destroyed or done away. We know what weak, feeble, uncertain notions and apprehensions, children have of things of any abstruse consideration; how, when they grow up with any improvements of parts and abilities, those conceptions vanish, and they are ashamed of them. It is the commendation of a child to love, honour, believe, and obey his father; but as for his science and notions, his father knows their childishness and folly. Notwithstanding all our confidence of high attainments, all our notions of God are but childish in respect of his infinite perfections. We, for the most part, but lisp and babble, and say we know not what, in our most accurate (as we think) conceptions and notions of God. We may love, honour, believe, and obey our Father; and therewith he accepts our childish thoughts, for they are but childish. We see but his back parts; we know but little of him. Hence is that promise, wherewith we are so often supported and comforted in our distress, "we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2: we shall "see him face to face," "know as we are known," 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "comprehend that for which we are comprehended:" that is, positively, now we see him not: all concluding that here we see but his back parts, not as he is, but in a dark, obscure representation, not in the perfection of his glory.

The queen of Sheba had heard much of Solomon, and thereupon framed many great thoughts of his magnificence in her mind; but when she came and saw his glory, she was forced to confess

that the one half of the truth had not been told her. We may suppose that we have attained here great knowledge, clear and high thoughts of God; but alas! when he shall bring us into his presence, we shall cry out, we never knew him as he is; the thousandth part of his glory, and perfection, and blessedness, never entered into our hearts.

The apostle tells us, 1 John iii. 2, that we know not what we ourselves shall be, what we shall find ourselves in the issue; much less will it enter into our hearts to conceive what God is, and what we shall find him to be. Consider either Him who is to be known, or the way whereby we know him, and this will farther appear.

[1.] We know so little of God, because it is God who is thus to be known; that is, it is he who hath described himself to us very much by this, that we cannot know him. What else doth he intend, where he calls himself invisible, incomprehensible, and the like? that is, he whom we do not, cannot know as he is: and our farther progress consists more, in knowing what he is not than what he is. Thus is he described to be immortal, infinite; that is, he is not as we are, mortal, finite, and limited. Hence is that glorious description of him, 1 Tim. vi. 16, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." His light is such as no creature can approach unto; he is not seen, not because he cannot be seen, but because we cannot bear the sight of him. The light of God, in whom there is no darkness, forbids all access to him by any

creature whatever: we, who cannot behold the sun in its glory, are too weak to bear the beams of infinite brightness.

On this consideration, as was said, the wise man professeth himself a very beast, and not to have the understanding of a man, Prov. xxx. 2; that is, he knew nothing in comparison of God, so that he seemed to have lost all his understanding when once he came to the consideration of him, his work, and his ways. In this consideration let our souls descend to some particulars.

As to the being of God, we are so far from a knowledge of it, so as to be able to instruct one another therein by words and expressions of it, that to frame any conceptions in our mind, with such forms and impressions of things as those whereby we receive the knowledge of all other things, is to make an idol to ourselves, and so to worship a god of our own making, and not the God that made us. We may as well, and as lawfully, hew him out of wood or stone, as form him in our minds a being suited to our apprehensions.

The utmost of the best of our thoughts of the being of God, is that we can have no thoughts of it. Our knowledge of a being is but low, when it mounts no higher than only to know that we know it not.

Again, there be some things of God, which he himself hath taught us to speak of, and to regulate our expressions of them; but when we have so done, we see not the things themselves, we know them not; to believe and admire is all that we attain to. We profess, as we are taught, that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal; and we know what disputes and notions there are about

omnipresence, immensity, infiniteness, and eternity. We have, I say, words and notions about these things; but as to the things themselves, what do we know, what do we comprehend of them? Can the mind of man, which is as nothing, do any more but swallow itself up in an infinite abyss? give itself up to what it cannot conceive, much less express? Is not our understanding brutish in the contemplation of such things, and as if it were not? Yea, the perfection of our understanding is, not to understand, and to rest there: they are but the back parts of eternity and infiniteness that we have a glimpse of. What shall I say of the Trinity, or the subsistence of distinct persons in the same individual essence? a mystery by many denied, because by none understood; a mystery whose every letter is mysterious.

Who can declare the generation of the Son, the procession of the Spirit, or the difference of the one from the other? But I shall not farther instance in particulars.

That infinite and inconceivable distance that is between him and us, keeps us in the dark as to any sight of his face, or clear apprehensions of his perfections. We know him rather by what he does, than by what he is; by his doing us good than by his essential goodness: and how little a portion of him, as Job speaks, is hereby discovered!

[2.] We know little of God, because it is faith alone whereby here we know him. I shall not now discourse about the impressions remaining on the hearts of all men by nature, that there is a God nor what they may rationally be taught concerning that God, from the works of his creation and

providence which they see and behold. It is confessedly, and that upon the woful experience of all ages, so weak, low, dark, confused, that none ever, on that account, glorified God as they ought, but notwithstanding all their knowledge of God, were indeed without God in the world.

The chief, and (as to this matter) almost only acquaintance we have with God and his dispensations of himself, is by faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him," Heb. xi. 6. Our knowledge of him and his rewarding, (the foundation of our obedience or coming to him,) is believing. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7: by faith, and so by faith, as not to have any express idea, image, or form of that which we believe: faith is all the argument we have of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. I might here insist upon the nature of it, and manifest from all its concomitants and concernments that we know but the back parts of what we know by faith only. As to its rise, it is built purely upon the testimony of him whom we have not seen; as the apostle speaks, "How can ye love him whom you have not seen?" that is, whom you know not but by faith that he is. Faith receives all upon his testimony, whom it receives to be, only upon his own testimony. As to its nature, it is an assent upon testimony, not an evidence upon demonstration; and, as was said before, the object of it is above us. Hence our faith, as was formerly observed, is called a seeing darkly, as in a glass; all that we know this way, (and all that we know of God we know this way,) is but low, and dark, and obscure.

But you will say, all this is true, yet it is only so to them that, perhaps, know not God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ; with them who do so it is otherwise. It is true, "no man hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, he hath revealed him," John i. 17, 18; and "the Son of God is now come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true," 1 John v. 20. The illumination of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, shineth upon believers, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Yea, and God, "who commandeth light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son," ver. 6; so that "though we were darkness, yet we are now light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. And the apostle says, "we all, with open face behold the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18; and we are now so far from being in such darkness, or at such a distance from God, that "our communion and fellowship is with the Father and the Son," 1 John i. 3. The light of the gospel whereby now God is revealed, is glorious; not a star, but the sun in his beauty, is risen upon us, and the veil is taken from our faces; so that though unbelievers, yea, and perhaps some weak believers, may be in some darkness, yet those of any growth or considerable attainments have a clear sight and view of the face of God in Jesus Christ.

Ans. 1. The truth is, we all of us know enough of him to love him more than we do, to delight in him and serve him, believe him, obey him, put our trust in him, above all that we have hitherto attained.

Our darkness and weakness are no plea for our negligence and disobedience. Who is it that hath walked up to the knowledge that he hath had of the perfections, excellences, and will of God? God's end in giving us any knowledge of himself here, is, that we may glorify him as God; that is, love him, serve him, believe and obey him, give him all the honour and glory that is due from poor sinful creatures to a sin-pardoning God and Creator. We must all acknowledge, that we were never thoroughly transformed into the image of that knowledge which we have had. And had we used our talents well, we might have been trusted with more.

Ans. 2. Comparatively, that knowledge which we have of God by the revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospel, is exceedingly eminent and glorious. It is so in comparison of any knowledge of God that might otherwise be attained, or was delivered under the Old Testament in the law, which had but the shadow of good things, not the express image of them. This the apostle pursues at large, 2 Cor. iii. Christ hath now, in these last days, revealed the Father from his own bosom, declared his name, made known his mind, will, and counsel, in a far more clear, eminent, distinct manner than he did formerly whilst he kept his people under the training of the law. And this is that which, for the most part, is intended in the places before mentioned: the clear, perspicuous delivery and declaration of God, and his will in the gospel, is expressly exalted in comparison of any other way of revelation of himself.

Ans. 3. The difference between believers and

unbelievers as to knowledge, is not so much in the matter of their knowledge, as in the manner of knowing. Unbelievers, some of them, may know more, and be able to say more, of God, his perfections, and his will, than many believers; but they know nothing as they ought, nothing in a right manner, nothing spiritually and savingly, nothing with a holy, heavenly light. The excellency of a believer is not that he hath a large apprehension of things; but that what he doth apprehend, which perhaps may be very little, he sees in the light of the Spirit of God, in a saving, soul-transforming light; and this is that which gives us communion with God, and not prying thoughts, or curious raised notions.

Ans. 4. Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit, reveals to the hearts of all his, God as a Father, as a God in covenant, as a rewarder, and that in a manner every way sufficient to teach us to obey him here, and to lead us to his bosom, to lie down there in the fruition of him to eternity. But yet now,

Ans. 5. Notwithstanding all this, it is but a little portion we know of him; we see only his back parts. For,

[1.] The intention of all gospel revelation is not to unveil God's essential glory, so that we should see him as he is, but merely to declare so much of him as he knows to be a sufficient foundation of our faith, love, obedience, and coming to him: that is, of the faith which here he expects from us, of such services as become poor creatures in the midst of temptations. But when he calls us to eternal admiration and contemplation without interruption, he will make a new

manner of discovery of himself; and the whole shape of things, as it now lies before us, will depart as a shadow.

[2.] We are dull and slow of heart to receive the things that are in the word revealed; God, by our infirmity and weakness, keeping us in continual dependence on him for teachings and revelations of himself out of his word, and never in this world bringing any soul to the utmost of what is from the word to be made out and discovered; so that, although the way of revelation in the gospel be clear and evident, yet we know little of the things themselves that are revealed.

Let us then revive the use and intention of this consideration. Will not a due apprehension of this inconceivable greatness of God, and that infinite distance wherein we stand from him, fill the soul with a holy and awful fear of him, so as to keep it in a frame unsuited to the thriving or flourishing of any lust whatever? Let the soul be continually used to reverential thoughts of God's greatness and omnipresence, and it will be much upon its watch as to any undue deportments. Consider him with whom you have to do; even "our God is a consuming fire;" and in your greatest abashments at his presence and eye, know that your very nature is too narrow to bear apprehensions suitable to his essential glory.

CHAP. XIII.

The ninth direction. When the heart is disquieted by sin, speak no peace to it, until God speak it. Peace without detestation of sin, unsound; so is peace, measured out unto ourselves. How we may know when we measure our peace unto ourselves. Directions as to that inquiry. The vanity of speaking peace slightly. Also of doing it on one singular account, not universally.

Direction 9. In case God disquiet the heart about the guilt of its distempers, either in respect of its root and indwelling, or in respect of any eruptions of it, take heed that thou speakest not peace to thyself before God speaks it; but hearken what he says to thy soul. This is our next direction, without the observation whereof the heart will be exceedingly exposed to the deceitfulness of sin.

This is a business of great importance. It is a sad thing for a man to deceive his own soul herein. All the warnings God gives us, in tenderness to our souls, to try and examine ourselves, do tend to the preventing of this great evil of speaking peace groundlessly to ourselves; which is, as to the issue, to bless ourselves in an opposition to God. It is not my business to insist upon the danger of it, but to help believers to prevent it, and to let them know when they do so.

To manage this direction aright, observe,

(1.) That, as it is the great prerogative and sovereignty of God to give grace to whom he pleases, (he hath mercy "on whom he will," Rom. ix. 16, and among all the sons of men, he

calls whom he will, and sanctifies whom he will ;) so, among those so called and justified, and whom he will save, he yet reserves this privilege to himself, to speak peace to whom he pleaseth, and in what degree he pleaseth, even amongst them on whom he hath bestowed grace. He is "the God of all consolation," in an especial manner in his dealings with believers. That is one of the good things that he keeps locked up in his family, and of it gives out to all his children at his pleasure. This the Lord insists on, Isa. lvii. 16—18: it is the case under consideration that is there insisted on. When God says, he will heal their breaches and disconsolations, he assumes this privilege to himself in an especial manner. "I create it," ver. 19: even in respect of these poor wounded creatures, I create it, and, according to my sovereignty, make it out as I please.

Hence, as it is with the conferring of grace in reference to them who are in the state of nature, that God doth it in great peculiarity, and his proceedings therein, in taking and leaving, are as to outward appearances quite beside, and oftentimes contrary to, all probable expectations; so is it in his communication of peace and joy in reference to them that are in the state of grace; he gives them out oftentimes quite beside our expectation, as to any appearing grounds of his dispensations.

(2.) As God creates it for whom he pleases, so it is the prerogative of Christ to speak it home to the conscience. Speaking to the church of Laodicea, who had healed her wounds falsely, and who spoke peace to herself when she ought not, he takes to himself that title, "I am the Amen, the faithful witness," Rev. iii. 14. He bears

testimony concerning our condition, as it is indeed. We may possibly mistake, and trouble ourselves in vain, or flatter ourselves upon false grounds; but he is the Amen, the faithful witness; and what he speaks of our state and condition, that it is indeed. He is said not to judge according to the sight of the eye; not according to any outward appearance, or any thing that may be subject to a mistake, as we are apt to do; but he shall judge and determine every cause as it is indeed, Isa. xi. 3.

Take these two previous observations, and I shall give some rules whereby men may know whether God speaks peace to them, or whether they speak peace to themselves only.

(1.) Men certainly speak peace to themselves, when their so doing is not attended with the greatest detestation imaginable of that sin, in reference whereunto they do speak peace to themselves, and with abhorrency of themselves for it. When men are wounded by sin, disquieted and perplexed, and, knowing that there is no remedy for them but only in the mercies of God through the blood of Christ, do therefore look to him and to the promises of the covenant in him; and thereupon quiet their hearts that it shall be well with them, and that God will be exalted that he may be gracious to them; while yet their souls are not wrought to the greatest detestation of the sin or sins on account whereof they are disquieted; this is to heal themselves, and not to be healed of God. This is but "a great and strong wind" that the Lord is nigh unto, but the Lord is not in the wind. When men do truly look upon Christ whom they have pierced, withou

which there is no healing or peace, they will mourn, Zech. xii. 10; they will mourn for him even upon this account, and detest the sin that pierced him. When we go to Christ for healing, faith eyes him peculiarly as one pierced. Faith takes several views of Christ, according to the occasions it hath of address to him and communion with him. Sometimes it views his holiness, sometimes his power, sometimes his love, his favour with his Father. And when it goes for healing and peace, it looks especially on the blood of the covenant, on his sufferings; for by his stripes are we healed, and "the chastisement of our peace was upon him," Isa. liii. 5. When we look for healing, his stripes are to be eyed; not in the outward story of them, which is the course of popish devotionists, but in the love, kindness, mystery, and design of the cross. And when we look for peace, his chastisement must be in our eye. Now I say that this, if it be done according to the mind of God, and in the strength of that Spirit which is poured out on believers, will beget a detestation of that sin or sins for which healing and peace are sought. So Ezek. xvi. 60, 61: "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And what then? "Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed." When God comes home to speak peace in a sure covenant of it, it fills the soul with shame for all the ways whereby it hath been alienated from him. And one of the things that the apostle mentions, as attending that godly sorrow which is accompanied with repentance unto salvation never to be repented of, is revenge;

"Yea, what revenge!" 2 Cor. vii. 11. They re-
flected on their miscarriages, with indignation anc
revenge for their folly in them. When Job comes
up to a thorough healing, he cries, "Now I abhor
myself," Job xlii. 6; and until he did so, he had
no abiding peace. He might, perhaps, have made
up himself with that doctrine of free grace which
was so excellently preached by Elihu, chap. xxxiii
14—30: but he would then have but skinned his
wounds: he must come to self-abhorrency if he
would come to healing. So was it with those in
Psa. lxxviii. 33, 35, in their great trouble and
perplexity for and upon account of sin. I doub
not but, upon the address they made to God in
Christ, (for that so they did is evident from the
titles they gave him, they call him their Rock and
their Redeemer, two words every where pointing
out the Lord Christ,) they spake peace to them
selves. But was it sound and abiding? No, i
passed away as the early dew: God speaks not on
word of peace to their souls. But why had the
not peace? Why, because in their address to God
they flattered him. But how doth that appear
"Their heart was not right with him, neither wer
they stedfast," ver. 37. They had not a detesta
tion nor relinquishment of that sin, in referenc
whereunto they spake peace to themselves. Le
a man make what application he will for healin
and peace; let him do it to the true Physician, le
him do it the right way, let him quiet his heart i
the promises of the covenant; yet when peace i
spoken, if it be not attended with the detestatio
and abhorrency of that sin which was the wound
and caused the disquietment, this is no peace o
God's creating, but of our own purchasing. It

but a skinning over the wound, whilst the matter of it lies at the bottom, which will putrefy, and corrupt, and corrode, until it break out again with noisomeness, vexation, and danger. Let not poor souls that walk in such a path as this; that are more sensible of the trouble of sin than of the pollution or uncleanness that attends it; that address themselves for mercy, yea, to the Lord in Christ address themselves for mercy, but yet will keep the sweet morsel of their sin under their tongue; let them not, I say, ever think to have true and solid peace. For instance, thou findest thy heart running out after the world, and it disturbs thee in thy communion with God. The Spirit speaks expressly to thee, "He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. This puts thee on dealing with God in Christ for the healing of thy soul, the quieting of thy conscience; but yet withal a thorough detestation of the evil itself abides not upon thee; yea, perhaps, that is liked well enough, except only in respect of the consequences of it. Perhaps thou mayest be saved, yet, as through fire, and God will have some work with thee before he hath done: but thou wilt have little peace in this life; thou wilt be sick and fainting all thy days, Isa. lvii. 17. This is a deceit that lies at the root of the peace of many professors, and wastes it. They deal with all their strength about mercy and pardon, and seem to have great communion with God in their so doing; they lie before him, so bewail their sins and follies that any one would think, yea, they think themselves, that surely they and their sins are now parted; and so they receive in mercy that satisfies their hearts for a little

season. But when a thorough search comes to be made, there hath been some secret reserve for the folly or follies treated about; at least, there hath not been that thorough abhorrency of it which is necessary; and their whole peace is quickly discovered to be weak and rotten, scarce abiding any longer than the words of begging it are in their mouths.

(2.) When men measure out peace to themselves upon the conclusions to which their convictions and rational principles will carry them this is a false peace, and will not abide. I shall a little explain what I mean hereby. A man hath got a wound by sin, he hath a conviction of some sin upon his conscience; he hath not walked uprightly as becometh the gospel; all is not well and right between God and his soul. He considers now what is to be done. Light he hath, and knows what path he must take, and how his soul hath been formerly healed. Considering that the promises of God are the outward means of application for the healing of his sores and quieting of his heart, he goes to them, searches them out finds out some one or more of them whose literal expressions are directly suited to his condition. Says he to himself, God speaks in this promise here I will take myself a plaster as long and broad as my wound: and so he brings the word of the promise to his condition, and sets him down in peace. This is another appearance upon the mount; the Lord is near, but the Lord is not in it. It hath not been the work of the Spirit, who alone can convince us of sin and righteousness and judgment, John xvi. 8, but the mere acting of the intelligent, rational soul. There are, w

ay, three sorts of lives, the vegetative, the sensi-
ive, and the rational or intelligent: some things
ave only the vegetative; some the sensitive also,
nd that includes the former; some have the ra-
ional, which takes in and supposes both the others.
Now he that hath the rational, doth not only act
uitably to that principle, but also to both the
thers; he grows and is sensible. It is so with
nen in the things of God: some are mere natural
nd rational men; some have a superadded con-
iction with illumination; and some are truly re-
enerate. Now he that hath the latter, hath also
he former; and therefore he acts sometimes up-
n the principles of the rational, sometimes upon
he principles of the enlightened man. His true,
piritual life, is not the principle of all his motions;
e acts not always in the strength thereof, neither
re all his fruits from that root. In this case that
speak of, he acts merely upon the principle of
onviction and illumination, whereby his first
atural powers are heightened; but the Spirit
reathes not at all upon all these waters. Take an
nstance: suppose the wound and disquiet of the
oul to be upon account of relapses, than which
here is nothing whereby deeper wounds are
iven to the soul, nor greater disquietments,
whatever the evil or folly be, though never so
mall as to the matter of it. In the perturbation
f his mind, he finds out that promise, Isa. lv.
, "The Lord will have mercy, and our God will
bundantly pardon," that is, he will multiply or
dd to pardon, he will do it again and again; or
hat in Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal their backslid-
ng, I will love them freely." This the man con-
iders, and thereupon concludes peace to himself,

whether the Spirit of God make the application o no, whether that give life and power to the lette or no; that he regards not. He doth not heark en whether God the Lord speak peace. He dot not wait upon God, who perhaps yet hides hi face, and sees the poor creature stealing peac and running away with it; knowing that the tim will come when he will deal with him again, an call him to a new reckoning, Hos. xi. 3; whe he shall see that it is in vain to go one step wher God doth not take him by the hand.

I see here, indeed, sundry other questions up on this arising and interposing themselves: I can not apply myself to them all; one I shall a littl speak to.

Quest. It may be said, then, Seeing that thi seems to be the path that the Holy Spirit leads u in, for the healing of our wounds and quieting o our hearts, how shall we know when we go alon ourselves, and when the Spirit also doth accom pany us?

Ans. 1. If any of you are out of the way upo this account, God will speedily let you know it for, besides that you have his promise, that "th meek he will guide in judgment, and teach the his way," Psa. xxv. 9, he will not let you alwa err. He will, I say, not suffer your nakedness t be covered with fig-leaves, but take them awa and all the peace you have in them, and will n suffer you to settle on such lees: you shall quick ly know your wound is not healed. That is, yo shall speedily know by the event whether or n it be thus with you; the peace you thus get an obtain will not abide. Whilst the mind is ove powered by its own convictions, there is no hol

for disquietments to fix upon: stay a little, and all these reasonings will grow cold, and vanish before the face of the first temptation that arises. But,

Ans. 2. This course, of speaking peace, is commonly taken without waiting, which is the grace, and that peculiar acting of faith, which God calls for to be exercised in such a condition. I know God doth sometimes come in upon the soul instantly, in a moment as it were, wounding and healing it; as I am persuaded it was in the case of David when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment: but ordinarily, in such a case, God calls for waiting and labouring, attending as the eye of a servant upon his master, Psa. cxxiii. 2; cxxx. 6. Says the prophet Isaiah, chap. viii. 17, "I will wait upon the Lord, who hideth his face from Jacob." God will have his children lie a while at his door when they have run from his house, and not instantly rush in upon him; unless he take them by the hand and pluck them in, when they are so ashamed that they dare not come to him. Now self-healers, or men that speak peace to themselves, do commonly make haste; they will not tarry; they do not hearken to what God speaks, Isa. xxviii. 16, but on they will go to be healed.

Ans. 3. Such a course, though it may quiet the conscience and the mind, the rational, concluding part of the soul, yet doth not sweeten the heart with rest and gracious contentment. The answer it receives is much like that Elisha gave Naaman, "Go in peace," 2 Kings v. 19; it quieted his mind, but I much question whether it sweetened his heart, or gave him any joy in

believing other than the natural joy that was then stirred in him upon his healing. "Do not my words do good? saith the Lord," Micah ii. 7. When God speaks, not only is there truth in his words that may answer the conviction of our understanding, but also they do good, they bring that which is sweet, and good, and desirable to the will and affections: by them the soul returns unto its rest, Psa. cxvi. 7.

Ans. 4. Which is worst of all, such a course amends not the life, it heals not the evil, it cures not the distemper. When God speaks peace, it guides and keeps the soul that it turn not again to folly; Psa. lxxxv. 8. When we speak it ourselves, the heart is not taken off the evil. Nay, it is the readiest course in the world to bring a soul into a trade of backsliding. If upon thy plastering thyself, thou findest thyself rather animated to the battle again than utterly weaned from it, it is too palpable that thou hast been at work with thy own soul, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit were not there. Yea, and oftentimes, nature having done its work, will, ere a few days are over, come for its reward; and having been active in the work of healing, will be ready to reason for a new wounding. In God's speaking peace, there comes along so much sweetness, and such a discovery of his love, as is a strong obligation on the soul no more to deal perversely.

(3.) We speak peace to ourselves when we do it slightly. This the prophet complains of in some teachers, Jer. vi. 14; "They have healed the wound of the daughter of my people slightly." And it is so with some persons; they make the healing of their wounds a slight work; a look, a

glance of faith to the promises does it, and so the matter is ended. The apostle tells us, that the word did not profit some, because it was not "mixed with faith," Heb. iv. 2; that is, it was not well tempered and mingled with faith. It is not a mere look to the word of mercy in the promise; but it must be mingled with faith until that be incorporated into the very nature of it; and then indeed it doth good unto the soul. If thou hast had a wound upon thy conscience, which was attended with weakness and disquietness, which now thou art freed of, how camest thou so? I looked to the promises of pardon and healing, and so found peace. Yea, but perhaps thou hast made too much haste; thou hast done it superficially; thou hast not fed upon the promise, so as to mix it with faith, to have got all the virtue of it diffused into thy soul. Thou hast only done it slightly; thou wilt find thy wound, ere it be long, breaking out again; and thou shalt know that thou art not cured.

(4.) Whoever speaks peace to himself upon any one account, and at the same time hath another evil of no less importance lying upon his spirit, about which he hath had no dealing with God; that man cries peace when there is none. A little to explain my meaning: a man hath neglected a duty again and again, perhaps when in all righteousness it was due from him; his conscience is perplexed, his soul wounded; he hath no quiet in his bones by reason of his sin; he applies himself for healing, and finds peace. Yet in the mean time, perhaps, worldliness, or pride, or some other folly wherewith the Spirit of God is exceedingly grieved, may lie in the bosom of that man, and

they neither disturb him, nor he them. Let not that man think that any of his peace is from God.

Then shall it be well with men, when they have an equal respect to all God's commandments. God will justify us from our sins, but he will not justify the least sin in us; he is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

(5.) When men of themselves speak peace to their consciences, it is seldom that God speaks humiliation to their souls: God's peace is humbling peace, melting peace, as it was in the case of David, Psa. li. 1. Never such deep humiliation, as when Nathan brought him the tidings of his pardon.

Qu. But you will say, When may we take the comfort of a promise as our own in relation to some peculiar wound, for the quieting of the heart?

Ans. In general, when God speaks it; be it when it will, sooner or later. I told you before, he may do it in the very instant of the sin itself, and that with such irresistible power, that the soul must needs receive his mind in it. Sometimes he will make us wait longer; but when he speaks, be it sooner or later, be it when we are sinning or repenting, be the condition of our souls what they please, if God speak he must be received. There is not any thing in our communion with him, for which the Lord is more troubled with us, if I may so say, than our unbelieving fears, that keep us off from receiving that strong consolation which he is so willing to give to us.

Qu. But you will say, We are where we were; when God speaks it, we must receive it: that is true, but how shall we know when he speaks?

Ans. 1. I would we could all practically come up to this, to receive peace when we are convinced that God speaks it, and that it is our duty to receive it: but,

Ans. 2. There is, if I may so say, a secret instinct in faith, whereby it knows the voice of Christ when he speaks indeed: as the babe leaped in the womb when the blessed virgin came to Elisabeth, faith leaps in the heart when Christ indeed draws nigh to it. "My sheep," says Christ, "know my voice," John x. 14: they know my voice, that is, they are used to the sound of it: and they know when his lips are opened to them, and are full of grace. The spouse was in a sad condition, asleep in security, Cant. v. 2; but yet as soon as Christ speaks, she cries, "It is the voice of my Beloved that speaks." She knew his voice, and was so acquainted with communion with him, that instantly she discovers him. And so will you also: if you exercise yourselves to acquaintance and communion with him, you will easily discern between his voice and the voice of a stranger. And take this criterion with you: when he doth speak, he speaks as never man spake; he speaks with power; and, one way or other, will make your hearts burn within you, as he did to the disciples, Luke xxiv. 32. He doth it by putting in his hand at the hole of the door, Cant. v. 4; that is, his Spirit into your hearts, to seize on you.

He that hath his senses exercised to discern good and evil; being increased in judgment and experience by a constant observation of the ways of Christ's intercourse, the manner of the

operations of the Spirit, and the effects it usually produces; is the best judge for him in this case.

Ans. 3. If the word of the Lord doth good to your souls, he speaks it. If it humble, if it cleanse, and be useful for those ends for which promises are given, such as to endear, to cleanse, to melt and bind to obedience, to cause self-emptiness, etc. But this is not my business; nor shall I farther divert in the pursuit of this direction, without the observation of which, sin will have great advantages towards the hardening of the heart.

CHAP. XIV.

The general use of the foregoing directions. The great direction for the accomplishment of the work aimed at. Act faith on Christ: the several ways whereby this may be done. Consideration of the fulness in Christ for relief, proposed. Great expectations from Christ: grounds of these expectations; his mercifulness, his faithfulness. Event of such expectations; on the part of Christ; on the part of believers. Faith peculiarly to be acted on the death of Christ; Rom. vi. 3—6. *The work of the Spirit in this whole business.*

Now, the considerations which I have hitherto insisted on, are rather of things preparatory to the work aimed at, than such as will effect it. That which hitherto I have aimed at, is the heart's due preparation for the work itself, without which it will not be accomplished.

II. Directions for the work itself. These are very few; I mean such as are peculiar to it. And they are those that follow.

Direction 1. Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of thy sin. His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this, and thou wilt die a conqueror. Yea, thou wilt, through the good providence of God, live to see thy lust dead at thy feet. But thou wilt say, How shall faith act itself on Christ for this end and purpose? I say, sundry ways.

(1.) By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of that provision which is laid up in Jesus Christ; for this end and purpose, that all thy lusts, this very lust wherewith thou art entangled, may be mortified by faith. Ponder on this, that though thou art no way able, in or by thyself, to get the conquest over thy distemper; though thou art even weary of contending, and art utterly ready to faint, Luke xviii. 1, 7; yet that there is enough in Jesus Christ, to yield thee relief, Phil. iv. 13. It stayed the prodigal when he was ready to faint, that yet there was bread enough in his father's house: though he was at a distance from it, yet it relieved him, and stayed him, that there it was. In thy greatest distress and anguish, consider that fulness of grace, those riches, those treasures of strength, might, and help, that are laid up in him for our support, John i. 16; Col. i. 19; Isa. xl. 28—31. Let them come into and abide in thy mind. Consider that he is exalted, and made a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, Acts v. 31. And if to give repentance, to give mortification, without which the other is not, nor can be. Christ tells us that we obtain purging grace by abiding in him, John xv. 3. To act faith upon the fulness that is in Christ for our supply, is an eminent way of abiding in Christ,

for both our ingrafting and abode is by faith, Rom. xi. 19, 20. Let, then, thy soul be exercised by faith with such thoughts and apprehensions as the following. I am a poor, weak creature; unstable as water, I cannot excel. This corruption is too hard for me, and is at the very door of ruining my soul; and what to do I know not. My soul is become as parched ground, and a habitation of dragons. I have made promises and broken them; vows and engagements have been as a thing of nought. Many persuasions have I had that I had got the victory and should be delivered; but I am deceived; so that I plainly see, that without some eminent succour and assistance, I am lost, and shall be prevailed on to an utter relinquishment of God. But yet, though this be my state and condition, let the hands that hang down be lifted up, and the feeble knees be strengthened. Behold the Lord Christ, who hath all fulness of grace in his heart, all fulness of power in his hand, John i. 16; Matt. xxviii. 18: he is able to slay all these his enemies. There is a sufficient provision in him for my relief and assistance: he can take my drooping, dying soul, and make me more than a conqueror, Rom. viii. 38. Why sayest thou, O my soul, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary there is no searching of his understanding; he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shal

utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint," Isa. xl. 27—31. He can make the dry, parched ground of my soul to become a pool, and my thirsty, barren heart as springs of water: yea, he can make this habitation of dragons, this heart so full of abominable lusts and fiery temptations, to be a place for grass and fruit for himself, Isa. xxxv. 7. So God stayed Paul under his temptation, with the consideration of the sufficiency of his grace; "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Though he were not immediately made partaker of it so far as to be freed from his temptation, yet the sufficiency of it in God for that end and purpose, was enough to stay his spirit. I say then, by faith be much in the consideration of that supply, and the fulness of it that is in Jesus Christ; and how he can at any time give thee strength and deliverance. Now, if hereby thou dost not find success to a conquest, yet thou wilt be stayed in the chariot, that thou shalt not fly out of the field until the battle be ended: thou wilt be kept from an utter despondency, and a lying down under thy unbelief, or a turning aside to false means and remedies that in the issue will not relieve thee. The efficacy of this consideration will be found only in the practice.

(2.) Raise up thy heart by faith to an expectation of relief from Christ. Relief in this case from Christ is like the prophet's vision, Hab. ii. 3: it is "for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, yet wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not

tarry." Though it may seem somewhat long to thee whilst thou art under thy trouble and perplexity, yet it shall surely come in the appointed time of the Lord Jesus, which is the best season. If, then, thou canst raise up thy heart to a settled expectation of relief from Jesus Christ; if thine eyes are towards him, Psa. cxxiii. 2, as "the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master," when he expects to receive somewhat from him; thy soul shall be satisfied, Isa. vii. 4, 7—9. He will assuredly deliver thee; he will slay the lust, and thy latter end shall be peace: only look for it; at his hand expect when and how he will do it. "If you will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

Qu. But thou wilt say, What ground have I to build such an expectation upon, so that I may expect not to be deceived?

Ans. As thou hast necessity to put thee on this course, and must be relieved and saved this way or none, (To whom wilt thou go? John vi. 68;) so there are in the Lord Jesus innumerable things to encourage and engage thee to this expectation.

As for the necessity of it, I have in part discovered it before, when I manifested that this is the work of faith, and of believers only. "Without me," says Christ, "you can do nothing," speaking with especial relation to the purging of the heart from sin, John xv. 2, 5. Mortification of any sin, must be by a supply of grace. Of ourselves we cannot do it. Now it hath pleased the Father "that in Christ all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19; that "of his fulness we might receive grace for grace," John i. 16. He is the Head,

from whence the new man must have influences of life and strength, or it will decay every day. If we are "strengthened with might" in the inner man, Col. i. 11, it is by Christ's "dwelling in our hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 16, 17. That this work is not to be done without the Spirit, I have also showed before. Whence do we expect the Spirit? From whom do we look for him? Who hath promised him to us, having procured him for us? Ought not all our expectations to this purpose to be on Christ alone? Let this then be fixed upon thy heart, that if thou hast not relief from him, thou shalt never have any: all ways, endeavours, contendings, that are not animated by this expectation of relief from Christ and him only, are to no purpose, will do thee no good: yea, if they are any thing else than supportments of thy heart in this expectation, or means appointed by himself for the receiving help from him, they are in vain.

Now, farther to engage thee to this expectation,

[1.] Consider his mercifulness, tenderness, and kindness, as he is our great High Priest, at the right hand of God. Assuredly he pities thee in thy distress: saith he, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," Isa. lxvi. 13: he hath the tenderness of a mother to a sucking child. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 17, 18. How is the ability of Christ upon the account of his suffering here proposed to us? "In that he himself hath suffered,

being tempted, he is able." Did the sufferings and temptations of Christ add to his ability and power? Not, doubtless, considered absolutely and in itself; but the ability here mentioned, is such as hath readiness, proneness, willingness to put itself forth, accompanying it. It is an ability of will against all dissuasions; he is able, having suffered and being tempted, to break through all dissuasions to the contrary, to relieve poor, tempted souls. He is "able" to help; it is a word taken from the effect; for he can now be moved to help, having been so tempted. So chap. iv. 15, 16, "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The exhortation of ver. 16, is the same that I am upon, namely, that we would entertain expectations of relief from Christ, which the apostle there calls "grace for seasonable help." If ever, says the soul, help were seasonable, it would be so to me in my present condition: this is that which I long for, grace for seasonable help: I am ready to die, to perish, to be lost for ever; iniquity will prevail against me if help come not in. Says the apostle, Expect this help, this relief, this grace from Christ. Yea, but on what account? That he lays down, ver. 15: and we may observe, that the word, ver. 16, which we have translated to obtain, means, "that we may receive it:" suitable and seasonable help will come in. I shall freely say this one thing, that establishing the soul by faith in expectation of relief from Jesus Christ,

(Matt. xi. 28,) on account of his mercifulness as our High Priest, will be more available to the ruin of thy lust and distemper, and have a better and speedier issue, than all the rigidest means of self-maceration that ever any of the sons of men engaged themselves in. Yea, let me add, that never any man did or shall perish by the power of any lust, sin, or corruption, who could raise his soul by faith to an expectation of relief from Jesus Christ, Isa. lv. 1—3; Rev. iii. 18.

[2.] Consider his faithfulness who hath promised; which may raise thee up and confirm thee in this waiting in an expectation of relief. He hath promised to relieve in such cases, and he will fulfil his word to the utmost. God tells us, that his covenant with us is like the ordinances of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, which have their certain courses, Jer. xxxi. 36. Thence David said, that he watched for relief from God, as one watcheth for the morning, a thing that will certainly come in its appointed season: so will be thy relief from Christ. It will come in its season, as the dew and rain upon the parched ground; for faithful is he who hath promised. Particular promises to this purpose are innumerable; with some of them, that seem peculiarly to suit his condition, let the soul be always furnished.

Now, there are two eminent advantages which always attend this expectation of succour from Jesus Christ.

(1) It engages him to a full and speedy assistance. Nothing doth more engage the heart of a man to be useful and helpful to another, than his expectation of help from him, if justly raised, and countenanced by him who is to give the relief.

Our Lord Jesus hath, by his kindness, care, and promises, raised our hearts to this expectation: certainly our rising up to it must needs be a great engagement upon him to assist us accordingly. This the psalmist gives us as an approved maxim; "Thou, Lord, never forsakest them that put their trust in thee." When the heart is once won to rest in God, to repose itself on him, he will assuredly satisfy it. He will never be as water that fails, nor hath he "said at any time to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." If Christ be chosen for the foundation of our supply, he will not fail us.

(2) It engages the heart to attend diligently to all ways and means whereby Christ is wont to communicate himself to the soul, and so takes in the real assistance of all graces and ordinances whatever. He that expects any thing from a man, applies himself to the ways and means whereby it may be obtained. The beggar that expects an alms, lies at his door or in his way from whom he doth expect it. The way whereby, and the means wherein, Christ communicates himself, is and are, ordinarily, his ordinances. He that expects any thing from him, must attend upon him therein. It is the expectation of faith that sets the heart to work. It is not an idle, groundless hope that I speak of. If, now, there be any vigour, efficacy, and power in prayer or sacraments to this end of mortifying sin, a man will assuredly be interested in it all by this expectation of relief from Christ. On this account I reduce all particular actings, by prayer, meditation, and the like, to this head; and so shall not farther insist on them. When they are grounded on this bottom,

and spring from this root, they are of singular use to this purpose; and not else.

Now on this direction for the mortification of a prevailing distemper you may have a thousand proofs from experience. Who hath walked with God under this temptation, and hath not found the use and success of it? I dare leave the soul under it, without adding any more. Only some particulars relating thereunto may be mentioned.

(1.) Act faith peculiarly upon the death, blood, and cross of Christ; that is, on Christ as crucified and slain. Mortification of sin is peculiarly from the death of Christ. It is one peculiar, yea, eminent end of the death of Christ, which shall assuredly be accomplished by it. He died to destroy the works of the devil: whatever came upon our natures by his first temptation, whatever receives strength in our persons by his daily suggestions, Christ died to destroy it all. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. This was his aim and intention, wherein he will not fail, in his giving himself for us. That we might be freed from the power of our sins, and purified from all our defiling lusts, was his design. "He gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 25—27. And this, by virtue of his death, in various and several degrees, shall be accomplished. Hence, our washing, purging, and cleansing, is every where ascribed to his

blood; 1 John i. 7; Heb. i. 3; Rev. i. 5. That being sprinkled on us, "purges our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. This is that we aim at, this we are in pursuit of, that our consciences may be purged from dead works; that these may be rooted out, destroyed, and have place in us no more. This shall certainly be brought about by the death of Christ; there will virtue go out from thence to this purpose. Indeed, all supplies of the Spirit, all communications of grace and power, are from hence, as I have elsewhere * showed. Thus the apostle states it, Rom. vi. In ver. 2, is the case proposed that we have in hand; "How shall we that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?" Dead to sin by profession; dead to sin by obligation to be so; dead to sin by a participation of virtue and power for the killing of it; dead to sin by union and interest in Christ, in and by whom it is killed; how shall we live therein? This he presses in the ensuing verses by sundry considerations, all taken from the death of Christ. This must not be, ver. 3, "Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" We have in baptism an evidence of our implantation into Christ; we are baptized into him; but into what of him are we baptized in order to an interest therein? His death, saith he: if indeed, and beyond outward profession, we are baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death. The explication of this, of our being baptized into the death of Christ, the apostle gives us, ver. 4, 5; "Therefore we are

* Treatise on Communion with God, chap. vii. viii.

buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." This is, saith he, our being "baptized into the death of Christ," namely, our conformity thereunto; to be dead unto sin, to have our corruptions mortified, as he was put to death for sin; so that as he was raised up to glory, we may be raised up to grace and newness of life.

He tells us whence it is that we have this baptism into the death of Christ, and this is from the death of Christ itself, ver. 6; "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." "Is crucified with him," not in respect of time, but of causality: we are crucified with him, meritoriously, in that he procured the Spirit for us to mortify sin: efficiently, in that from his death virtue comes forth for our crucifying: in the way of a representation and exemplar; we shall assuredly be crucified unto sin, as he was for our sin. This is that the apostle intends. Christ, by his death, destroying the works of the devil, procuring the Spirit for us, hath so killed sin as to its reign in believers, that it shall not obtain its end and dominion.

(2.) Then, act faith on the death of Christ, and that under these two notions; [1.] In expectation of power; [2.] In endeavours for conformity; Phil. iii. 10; Col. iii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 15—19.

For the first, the direction given in general may suffice.

As to the latter, the words of the apostle, Gal. iii. 1, may give us some light unto our direction. Let faith look on Christ in the gospel as he is set forth dying and crucified for us: look on him under the weight of our sins, praying, bleeding, dying; bring him in that condition into thy heart by faith; apply his blood, so shed, to thy corruptions; do this daily: 1 Cor. xv. 31; 1 Pet. i. 16; v. 1, 2; Col. i. 3. I might draw out this consideration to a great length, in sundry particulars, but I must come to a close.

I have only, then, to add the heads of the work of the Spirit in this business of mortification, which is so peculiarly ascribed to him.

In one word, this whole work which I have described as our duty, is effected, carried on, and accomplished, by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it. As,

I. He alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil, and guilt, and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified. Without this conviction, or whilst it is so faint that the heart can wrestle with it or digest it, there will be no thorough work made. An unbelieving heart (as, in part, we all have such) will shift with any consideration, until it be overpowered by clear and evident convictions: now this is the proper work of the Spirit; he convinces of sin, John xvi. 8. He alone can do it. If men's rational considerations, with the preaching of the letter, were able to convince them of sin, we should, it may be, see more convictions than we do. There comes, by the preaching of the word, an apprehension upon the understandings of men that they are sinners, that such and such things

are sins, that themselves are guilty of them: but this light is not powerful, nor doth it lay hold on the practical principles of the soul, so as to conform the mind and will unto them, and to produce effects suitable to such an apprehension. And therefore it is, that wise and knowing men, destitute of the Spirit, do not think those things to be sins at all wherein the chief movings and actings of lust do consist. It is the Spirit alone that can do, that doth, this work to the purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit doth in order to the mortification of any lust whatever; it convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretences, makes the soul own its abomination, and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done, all that follows is in vain.

II. The Spirit alone reveals unto us the fulness of Christ for our relief; which is the consideration that stays the heart from false ways, and from despairing despondency; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

III. The Spirit alone establishes the heart in expectation of relief from Christ; which is the great sovereign means of mortification, as hath been discovered; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

IV. The Spirit alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts, with its sin-killing power; for by the Spirit are we baptized into the death of Christ.

V. The Spirit is the Author and Finisher of our sanctification; gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification, when the contrary principle is weakened and abated; Eph. iii. 16—18.

VI. In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it hath supportment from the Spirit. Whence is the power, life, and vigour of prayer? Whence its efficacy to prevail with God? Is it not from the Spirit? He is the "Spirit of supplication" promised to them who look on him whom they have pierced, Zech. xii. 10; enabling them to pray with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 16. This is confessed to be the great medium, or way, of faith's prevailing with God. Thus Paul dealt with his temptation, whatever it were; "I besought God that it might depart from me," 2 Cor. xii. 8. What is the work of the Spirit in prayer; whence and how it gives us its assistance, and makes us to prevail; what we are to do that we may enjoy his help for that purpose; it is not my present intention to demonstrate.

THE END.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
ED 1799.

82 46563
School of Theology

BT
715
985
1847

Owen, John, 1616-1683.

On indwelling sin; and, On the mortif
ers. [London] The Religious Tract Soci
xii, 264, xviii, 142p. 15cm. (The w
Puritans and divines of the seventeenth

Half-title reads: The nature, power,
indwelling sin in believers: together w
ing, and means of prevention, opened, a
a resolution of sundry cases of conscie

1. Sin. I. Title. II. Title: The n
prevalency of indwelling sin in believe
mortification of sin in believers. IV.
The mortification of sin in believers.

A 11682